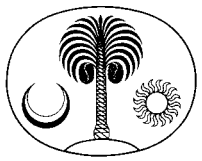
CLAUDE ADDAS

QUEST FOR THE RED SULPHUR

THE LIFE OF IBN ʿARABĪ



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CLAUDE ADDAS

Quest for the Red Sulphur

The Life of Ibn ʿArabī

Translated from the French
by Peter Kingsley

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English translation © The Islamic Texts Society 1993
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TO MY FATHER

'Tell me, friend, which place you want me to take you to . . ..
—I want to go to the city of the Messenger, in search
of the Station of Radiance and the Red Sulphur.'

Ibn ʿArabī, *The Book of the Journey by Night*

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This is not just a translation of the book which appeared in French in 1989 under the title *Ibn ʿArabī ou La quête du Soufre Rouge*, but effectively a second edition. The author has modified a number of passages; sometimes new material has been added; and what was originally just an index of select Arabic terms has been expanded into a full glossary for the convenience of readers with no knowledge of the language. As a rule the author's practice of omitting the *al-* prefix in proper names has been adhered to.

I owe a special debt of gratitude not only to Claude Addas but also to Michel Chodkiewicz for their constant help.

P.K.

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SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION FOR ARABIC CHARACTERS

ʾ ء	z ز	q ق
b ب	s س	k ك
t ت	sh ش	l ل
th ث	ṣ ص	m م
j ج	ḍ ض	n ن
ḥ ح	ṭ ط	h ه
kh خ	ẓ ظ	w و
d د	ʿ ع	y ي
dh ذ	gh غ	
r ر	f ف	

The article: al- and l- (even in front of sun letters)

Short vowels	*Long vowels*	*Diphthongs*
ـُ u	ا ā	ـَو aw
ـَ a	و ū	ـَي ay
ـِ i	ي ī	يّ iyy
		ـُو uww

Awāmir: al-Awāmir al-ᶜalā'iyya fī l-umūr al-ᶜalā'iyya, by Ibn Bībī.
Bayān: al-Bayān al-mughrib fī akhbār al-maghrib, by Ibn ᶜIdhārī.
Bidāya: al-Bidāya wa l-nihāya, by Ibn Kathīr.
B.E.O.: Bulletin des études orientales.
Dhikr: Dhikr bilād al-andalus li mu'allif majhūl.
Dībāj: al-Dībāj al-mudhhab, by Ibn Farḥūn.
Durra: al-Durrat al-fākhira, by Ibn ᶜArabī.
EI: Encyclopedia of Islam (*EI*[1] first edition, *EI*[2] second edition).
E.T.: Études traditionnelles.
Fuṣūṣ: Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam, by Ibn ᶜArabī.
Fut.: al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya, by Ibn ᶜArabī.
GAL: Geschichte der arabischen Literatur, by C. Brockelmann.
Histoire et classification: Histoire et classification de l'œuvre d'Ibn ᶜArabī, by O. Yahia.
I.F.A.O.: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
I.F.D.: Institut français de Damas.
Ijāza: Ijāza li l-malik al-Muẓaffar, by Ibn ᶜArabī.
Mishkāt: Mishkāt al-anwār, by Ibn ᶜArabī.
Muḥāḍarat: Muḥāḍarat al-abrār, by Ibn ᶜArabī.
Muᶜjib: al-Muᶜjib fī talkhīṣ akhbār al-Maghrib, by ᶜAbd al-Waḥīd al-Marrākushī.
Nafḥ: Nafḥ al-ṭīb, by Maqqarī.
Nayl: Nayl al-ibtihāj, by Aḥmad Bābā.
Passion: The Passion of al-Hallāj, by Massignon.
R.E.J.: Revue des études juives.
R.G.: Répertoire général des œuvres d'Ibn ᶜArabī, in O. Yahia's *Histoire et classification.*
Rūḥ: Rūḥ al-quds, by Ibn ᶜArabī.
Seal of the Saints: Seal of the Saints, by M. Chodkiewicz.
Shadharāt: Shadharāt al-dhahab, by Ibn al-ᶜImād.
Tak.: Takmila, by Ibn al-Abbār.
Tālī: Tālī wafayāt al-aᶜyān, by Ibn al-Suqāᶜī.
Tarājim: Tarājim rijāl al-qarnayn al-sādis wa l-sābiᶜ, by Abū Shāma.
Tashawwuf: al-Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf, by Aḥmad Tādilī.
ᶜUnwān: ᶜUnwān al-dirāya, by Ghubrīnī.
Wāfī: al-Wāfī bi l-wafayāt, by Ṣafadī.
Waḥīd: al-Waḥīd fī sulūk ahl al-tawḥīd, by ᶜAbd al-Ghaffār al-Qūṣī.

Foreword

WHEN, several years ago, I decided to set off on the track of Ibn ᶜArabī, I was aware that the journey would be long and adventurous, and I would not have set out at all unless I had been certain at the time that I would find help and comfort in the company of other pilgrims. Of those travelling companions—of whom there have been so many that it would not be possible to mention them all—there are five in particular to whom I owe a special debt: Professor Pierre Thillet, who agreed to supervise my thesis; my father Michel Chodkiewicz, through whom I discovered the universe of the Shaikh al-Akbar while still a child, through whom I came to love him while a teenager and understand him as an adult; my husband, who during these years of research shared daily in my venture and accepted all the sacrifices it involved; my daughter Walāya, who joined up with us in mid-journey to bring us 'freshness and peace'; Dominique de Ménil, who through her generous support and friendly enthusiasm made my work so much easier at a practical level. I would have them all know how grateful to them I am. Finally, my sister Agnès devoted weeks to the difficult and tiresome task of typing up a manuscript which was often virtually illegible. She knows how dear she is to me, but I wish also to express a sister's gratitude.

Above and beyond these direct sources of assistance I am indebted to the lineage—still very much alive—of Ibn ᶜArabī's disciples for helping me bring this work to completion. Whether famous or unknown, they have ensured the transmission and preservation of the legacy of Ibn ᶜArabī over a period of eight centuries. I trust I am not unworthy to inscribe my name in turn in their *silsila*.

Paris, October 1987

Introduction

OVER the past few years the space given by publishers to works on Sufism in general and on Ibn ᶜArabī in particular has grown considerably. This has been the case in Arab countries as well as in the West, and has often involved the publication of works outside of the more strictly specialised series. The number of critical editions, translations and monographs has multiplied.[1] A number of different aspects of the teaching of Ibn ᶜArabī—called the 'Shaikh al-Akbar', 'Greatest of the Masters'—have certainly benefitted from this attention; however, any search in recent bibliographies for a work on his life which meets the basic requirements of historical research will be in vain. The only work of any extent which is at all accessible today remains the study by Asín Palacios in his *Islam cristianizado:* at the beginning of this book, published in Madrid in 1931, he attempted in less than a hundred pages to reconstruct the principal stages in the terrestrial journey and spiritual path of the author of the *Futūḥāt makkiyya.* But although Asín was living and writing after both Nicholson and Nyberg, he was much more of a pioneer in Ibn ᶜArabī studies than either of them and unfortunately, at the time when he produced his *Vida de Abenarabi,* research on the subject of the Shaikh al-Akbar was virtually non-existent. This means that he did not have access to all the information now available: I refer especially to O. Yahia's *History and Classification of the Work of Ibn ᶜArabī,* which is the result of a long and patient inventory of the manuscripts. Also, many of the monographs that have been devoted to the mystical path (*taṣawwuf*) during the sixth and seventh centuries of the Hegira—for example the works of Fritz Meier and Henry Corbin—had not yet been written, and inevitably this made it more difficult than it is nowadays to situate Ibn ᶜArabī in his environment.

As a result, even though the biographical sketch which we owe to the great Spanish Islamologist has down to the present time remained the principal

1. These works are too numerous to be listed here, and are referred to in the bibliography.

source used by most writers when referring to Ibn ʿArabī's life, it is largely outdated. It should be added that, in addition to these shortcomings for which history alone is responsible, there are also serious deficiencies in his work which are due to his unfamiliarity with a considerable number of Ibn ʿArabī's own writings and also with the historiographic and hagiographic literature composed in the Shaikh al-Akbar's time or shortly afterwards. In fact Asín only used the information preserved in just a few of Ibn ʿArabī's works—mainly the *Futūḥāt* and the *Rūḥ al-quds*—and in two compilations of considerably later date: the *Nafḥ al-ṭīb* by Maqqarī (*d.* 1041/1631) and the *Shadharāt al-dhahab* by Ibn al-ʿImād (*d.* 1089/1678). In other words, on the one hand he failed to utilise a large number of internal sources—especially the *samāʿ*s or 'reading certificates' included in Ibn ʿArabī's works which, as we will see later, make it possible to retrace and date with precision his travels in the East. This is not even to mention the many unpublished treatises by Ibn ʿArabī which sometimes contain invaluable information about his encounters, his journeys and his spiritual experiences. On the other hand he failed to exploit external sources which, as well as being of fundamental importance, are also readily available: for example the *Takmila* of Ibn al-Abbār (*d.* 658/1259), published in Madrid as far back as 1888, the *ʿUnwān al-dirāya* by Ghubrīnī (*d.* 704/1304), published in Algiers in 1910, or the *Tashawwuf ilā rijāl al-taṣawwuf*[2] of Yūsuf Ibn Yaḥyā al-Tādilī (*d.* 627/1230). These and other similar documents supply various pieces of information about Ibn ʿArabī as well as about the men and women who—directly or indirectly—played a role in his development. Similarly, it is clear that Asín never consulted the *Wāfī* by Ṣafadī (*d.* 764/1363), the *Dhayl ʿalā kitāb al-rawḍatayn* by Abū Shāma (*d.* 665/1268) or the *Dhayl mir'āt al-zamān* by Yūnīnī (*d.* 726/1326).[3] And yet these documents, along with a considerable number of others which I will not list here, provide detailed information about the reception Ibn ʿArabī was given in the East and about his companions in Syria.

For these reasons it is not surprising that even the most superficial examination of the *Vida de Abenarabi* reveals inaccuracies, instances of confusion and numerous errors. For example, Asín Palacios states that Ibn ʿArabī was in Mosul in 601H, and in Cairo in 603.[4] In fact we can now be much more

2. Although the first critical edition, by A. Faure, was only published in 1954, in Rabat (a second edition, by A. Tawfīq, was also published in Rabat in 1984), a considerable number of manuscripts of the work were in existence and available.

3. At the time when he was writing *Islam cristianizado*, these works had to my knowledge not yet been published.

4. *Islam cristianizado*, pp.85–6.

precise: it can be established that in 601H Ibn ʿArabī also went to Jerusalem;[5] that in 602 he went to Konya,[6] and then back to Jerusalem[7] before going on to Hebron in 602[8] and finally to Cairo in 603. Elsewhere Palacios makes a mistake—persistently repeated by later writers, who as a rule merely copy his conclusions—regarding the date of Ibn ʿArabī's meeting in Konya with the Seljuq sultan Kaykā'ūs. 'Ibn ʿArabī', he writes, 'arrived in Konya, capital of that part of the Byzantine Empire which had submitted to Islam; it was there that the king Kaykā'ūs had ascended to the throne in 607/1210. Word of Ibn ʿArabī's fame had reached the court ahead of him, and the king went out to meet him in person and welcome him with every possible honour.... This period of relative calm allowed Ibn ʿArabī to resume his writing and it was there, during that year, that he produced two of his works: the *Risālat al-anwār* and the *Kitāb mashāhid al-asrār*'.[9] Corbin for his part briefly refers to the meeting between the king and the Sufi in the following terms: 'Three years later, in 607/1210, Ibn ʿArabī was in the heart of Anatolia, in Konya, where the Seljuq sovereign Kaykā'ūs I accorded him a magnificent reception'.[10] In fact, however, the *Risālat al-anwār* was written in Konya in 602, not 607: this is stated explicitly by Ibn ʿArabī himself at the end of the text.[11] As for the *Kitāb mashāhid al-asrār*, it was composed in Seville in 590: this also is stated by the author, in the very first lines of the work.[12] Finally, the 'magnificent reception' by Kaykā'ūs cannot possibly have taken place in 607H for the simple reason that the king only ascended to the throne in 608/1211.[13] It is worth noting that neither Palacios nor Corbin gives the slightest reference which would help to substantiate the claim that this particular meeting took place at that particular date.

One other fact to be borne in mind is that as a rule Asín simply repeated the information contained in the short biography which the Egyptian editor appended to the text of the *Futūḥāt*, and which is essentially a résumé of Maqqarī's *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*.[14] Hence for example his account of the famous incident in Bougie in 597/1200, when Ibn ʿArabī saw himself united with the stars and with the letters of the alphabet. In fact, however, this event is reported in detail not only by Ghubrīnī[15] but also on two separate occasions

5. Cf. O. Yahia, *Histoire et classification de l'œuvre d'Ibn ʿArabī*, I.F.D., Damascus 1964, Répertoire Général, §§ 26, 68, 169.

6. Ibid., R.G. §§ 28, 33, 70.

7. Ibid., R.G. §§ 297, 511, 548.

8. Ibid., R.G. § 639, *samāʿ* § 8.

9. *Islam cristianizado*, p.89.

10. Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn ʿArabī*, Princeton and London 1969, p.69.

11. O. Yahia, R.G. § 33.

12. Ibid., R.G. § 432.

13. See *EI*² s.v. Kaykā'ūs.

14. In the 1293 edition which Asín consulted, it is printed at the beginning of the first volume; in the Būlāq edition (1329H), at the end of volume IV.

15. *ʿUnwān al-dirāya*, Algiers edition, 1970, pp.158–59.

by Ibn ᶜArabī himself.[16] It is the same in the case of the meeting between Ibn ᶜArabī and Suhrawardī at Baghdad: according to Asín 'he [Ibn ᶜArabī] arrived in 608 at Baghdad, his final destination; his aim was to meet in person a certain great Sufi who had opened a school for homiletics and mystical exercises in the city. This man was the famous Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, author of the *ᶜAwārif al-maᶜārif*.... The biographers relate all the details of this initial meeting between the two masters: "They looked at each other in silence for a long while, then they parted without saying a word" '.[17] Unfortunately Asín fails to tell us who these biographers were. For his own part O. Yahia cites Ibn al-ᶜImād as authority for locating the episode in Baghdad in 608.[18] However, the relevant passage in the *Shadharāt*[19] gives neither a place nor a date for the event, which raises the question as to whether it took place at all.

On the other hand Asín Palacios makes no mention whatever of the marriage between Ibn ᶜArabī and the mother of Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnāwī, even though it is referred to in several Arabic and Persian sources. As a matter of fact this event in the private life of the Shaikh al-Akbar was to have very important consequences for the diffusion of his thought in the Islamic world. On the other hand, Asín concocted—without any supporting evidence whatever—a meeting between Ibn ᶜArabī and Abū Madyan at Bougie in 590.[20] In fact Ibn ᶜArabī states explicitly in the *Rūḥ*[21] that he never encountered 'physically' the man whom he considered his master *par excellence*.

Finally, it is important to emphasise the extent to which the reliability of the *Vida de Abenarabi* is compromised by the fact that it is profoundly marked—sometimes even disfigured—by its author's religious prejudice. This is already evident in the very title of the work: *Islam cristianizado*. There is no point in dwelling on the offensive expressions ('mental imbalance', 'pathological case') which often accompany Ibn ᶜArabī's name.[22] However irritating they are, they can at least be ignored. To a certain extent this kind of prejudice is understandable in the case of a churchman living at the time of Asín Palacios; but when it leads him to assert—without any justification whatever—that Ibn ᶜArabī was motivated by a 'political hatred against the Christians' which made him return to Anatolia in 612 'so as to direct the

16. Ibn ᶜArabī, *Kitāb al-bā'*, Cairo 1954, pp.10–11; *Kitāb al-kutub*, in *Rasā'il*, Hyderabad 1948, p.49. 17. *Islam cristianizado*, p.91. 18. *Histoire et classification*, p.98.

19. Ibn al-ᶜImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, Beirut 1979, V, pp.193–94.

20. *Islam cristianizado*, p.60.

21. *Rūḥ*, Damascus 1970, §19, p.114; English translation by R.W.J. Austin, *Sufis of Andalusia*, second edition, Sherborne 1988, p.121.

22. See for example pp.79, 101, 104–5.

anti-Christian policy' of Kaykā'ūs, his bias is something much more serious. Interpreting inner states of the soul is one thing; rewriting history is another. If Asín had gone to even the slightest trouble to acquaint himself with Near-Eastern chronicles for the period of Ibn ᶜArabī's lifetime, he would have discovered that the policy of Kaykā'ūs was so far from being anti-Christian that Muslim writers accused him of colluding with the Franks.[23]

*

If Asín can to some extent be excused for the shortcomings of his work, the same cannot be said for those more recent writers who have tackled the subject of Ibn ᶜArabī's life. The fact is that they in turn failed to consult the works mentioned above even though they had become easily accessible. For instance, Ibn ᶜArabī's *Rasā'il* were edited in Hyderabad in 1948, a first critical edition of Tādilī's *Tashawwuf* was produced in 1954, and the majority of the *Ṭabaqāt* have appeared in print starting from 1950. Instead of taking the trouble to check Palacios' assertions, these later writers have simply reproduced the errors contained in *Islam cristianizado*—or, even worse, added to them.[24] In this respect Ruspoli's introduction to chapter 167 of the *Futūḥāt* is typical. In the four unfortunate pages which he devotes to the life of Ibn ᶜArabī, he manages to invent for him a marriage with Niẓām, the inspirer of the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*,[25] and to have him return to the West after his definitive departure for the East in 598.[26]

There is no denying that O. Yahia has made a serious effort to achieve precision in the chronological table of Ibn ᶜArabī's life which he presents at the start of his General Index. However, here too one notes a considerable number of omissions and inaccuracies. For example, for the year 586/1190 he limits himself to reporting the visit made by Ibn ᶜArabī to one of the women who were his spiritual masters in Marchena; but strangely he fails to point out that it was during the same year that Ibn ᶜArabī went to Cordoba, where

23. On this subject see S. Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, New York 1977, pp.440–41, and below, chapter 9.

24. I am referring specifically to the introduction by Ruspoli to chapter 167 of the *Futūḥāt* (*L'Alchimie du bonheur parfait*, Paris 1981) and to the even more recent introduction by M. Gloton to chapter 178 of the *Futūḥāt* (*Traité de l'Amour*, Paris 1987). Austin, in his introductions to *Sufis of Andalusia* and to his translation of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (*The Bezels of Wisdom*, London 1980) presents a biographical summary that is much more precise and contains far fewer mistakes; he also took the trouble to follow up the references to Ibn ᶜArabī's masters in the *Takmila*. Even so, we will see that at times he made the error of relying on Asín's assertions without checking whether they were correct.

25. *L'Alchimie du bonheur parfait*, p.13.

26. Ibid.: 'During those years (1210–24) Ibn ᶜArabī remained settled for most of the time in Anatolia while continuing to travel between Mecca, Egypt, the Maghreb and Tunisia'.

a decisive event in his spiritual destiny occurred. In fact this piece of information is given in a famous passage of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.[27] Similarly, he omits to mention that in 595/1198 the Shaikh al-Akbar returned to Cordoba, where he attended the funeral of Averroes which he describes in the *Futūḥāt*;[28] or that on the 12th of Jumādā 599/1202 he went to Taif where, as he tells us at the start of the *Ḥilyat al-abdāl*,[29] he meditated at Ibn ʿAbbās' grave. And one learns with astonishment that in 598 Ibn ʿArabī stopped off in Casablanca—even though the city which bears this name was only built in the eighteenth century.[30]

*

This all goes to show that at the present time no dependable and detailed study of Ibn ʿArabī's life is available in a Western language. Those who are fortunate enough to be able to cope with the subtleties of Arabic are left with the option of referring to the Arab sources, either ancient or modern; they are then faced with a choice between two different kinds of document, or more precisely between two different types of information. On the one hand there are the details provided by the entries—often brief, always lifeless—in the *ṭabaqāt*, those vast biographical dictionaries in which the author confidently sums up a whole lifetime in a few lines. Boring and dull, these *curricula vitae* are all very much the same and are repeated from writer to writer, century to century: names, first names, surnames, masters, travels, writings. To spare oneself the labour one could simply refer, like Asín, to the *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*—a work in which its author meticulously noted down and assembled most of the entries referring to Ibn ʿArabī which existed in his time.[31] But Maqqarī was no different from many other Arabic compilers in his disregard for historical truth; what is more, he was a fervent supporter of Ibn ʿArabī. As a result, he reproduced a number of fairly incredible anecdotal stories which, as we will see when we come to examine them, very probably derive from Fayrūzābādī (*d.* 817/1414).

The second type of document consists of hagiographical writings. For example, there are a few rather fine pages at the start of al-Qārī al-Baghdādī's *Manāqib Ibn ʿArabī*[32] which present a summary of Ibn ʿArabī's life in the same kind of anecdotal style which Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār used in his *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'*. But the author does not stop there. Keen to rally his reader to

27. *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Afīfī, Beirut 1980, I, p.110.
28. *Futūḥāt*, Būlāq edition, 1329H, I, p.154.
29. *Ḥilyat al-abdāl*, in *Rasā'il*, p.1.
30. See *EI*² s.v. Dār al-Bayḍā'.
31. Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, Beirut 1388/1968, II, pp.161–84.
32. *Al-Durr al-thamīn fī manāqib Muḥyī l-Dīn*, Beirut 1959 (henceforth referred to as *Manāqib Ibn ʿArabī*).

the cause of the Shaikh al-Akbar—for whom he expresses a profound veneration—he goes to great lengths to demonstrate that there were ʿ*ulamā'* or theologians with the very best of reputations, and hardly likely to raise any suspicions as to their orthodoxy, who acknowledged Ibn ʿArabī's sainthood. To achieve this he simply puts into their mouths statements which they never made. So, for instance, Dhahabī's sober assertion that Ibn ʿArabī was 'the model for those who teach the Oneness of Being' is transformed in the *Manāqib* into 'the shaikh, the ascetic, the imām, the saint, the ocean of truths . . .'![33] This kind of golden legend was then perpetuated in later centuries by Shaʿrānī[34] and, to a lesser degree, by Maqqarī.

What is true of some of Ibn ʿArabī's supporters is also true of virtually all his opponents. They too were not bothered with scruples. Both sides were writing *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* and piously relegated historical truth to its proper place. For example Dhahabī does not think twice about reporting that Ibn ʿArabī had married a jinn who used to beat him black and blue.[35] Others, not quite so prone to such flights of fantasy, asserted that he had perverse sexual habits[36]—an accusation which admittedly is hurled at anyone who is open to suspicion of heresy in the eyes of the Doctors of the Law.

During the last decade Shaikh Maḥmūd Ghurāb of Damascus has gone to considerable lengths to make Ibn ʿArabī better known to the Arab world. He has published ten or so different works which assemble various texts of Ibn ʿArabī according to theme: 'the Imaginal World', 'the Perfect Man', and so on. One of these monographs, published in Damascus in 1983, is called *The Life of Ibn ʿArabī according to Ibn ʿArabī*.[37] Faithful to the method he has laid down for himself, the author simply reproduces one after another various texts (extracted only from printed works of Ibn ʿArabī: he makes no use of manuscripts) in which the Shaikh al-Akbar speaks in the first person. This anthology could be genuinely useful, but unfortunately Maḥmūd Ghurāb fails to give the references for this patchwork of quotations. In the case of a literary output as vast as Ibn ʿArabī's—adding up to thousands of pages—this is, to say the least, inconvenient.

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33. Ibid., p.38. The editor of the *Manāqib*, Dr Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Munajjid, took the trouble to cite the original text of Dhahabī which al-Qārī al-Baghdādī claims to be quoting. It was recorded by Yāfiʿī (cf. *Mir'āt al-janān*, 1338 edition, IV, p.100) and no doubt derives from Dhahabī's *Ta'rīkh al-islām*, although I have not been able to confirm this. The same kind of falsification occurs in the case of Ibn Kāthīr's biographical note in the *Bidāya* (cf. *Manāqib Ibn ʿArabī*, p.36).
34. Shaʿrānī, *al-Yawāqīt wa l-jawāhir*, Cairo 1369, ad init.; *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, I, p.188.
35. Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-iʿtidāl*, Beirut 1965, III, p.659.
36. See for example Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi l-wafayāt*, Wiesbaden 1981, IV, p.174.
37. This is a free translation of the original title (*Ibn ʿArabī: tarjamat ḥayātihi min kalāmihi*, Damascus 1983).

All in all, any contemporary reader of Ibn ʿArabī who would like to consult a biography of him is—even if he happens to know Arabic—faced with only two options. Either there is the study by Asín Palacios, which apart from its major deficiencies is also extremely prejudiced, or there are the frequently fantastic stories told by the Arab biographers which, depending on the author's bias, provide a vast wealth of either fabricated anecdotes or pious defamation. This is, to say the very least, a highly paradoxical situation when one considers on the one hand the immense significance (acknowledged even by his detractors) of Ibn ʿArabī and his school in the history of Sufism, and when on the other hand one notes how the number of studies and translations in these areas keeps increasing from year to year. It was no doubt presumptuous to try to set matters right, but that is the task I have set myself in this book. To study the Greatest of the Masters as if he was just a brilliant metaphysician, without any roots, without a history of his own, without a homeland, is to risk failing to interpret correctly the nuances of a way of thinking which is inseparable from his personal experience. Certainly he was destined to fulfil an eminent function in the subsequent history of Sufism, both as a major point of reference in matters of doctrine and, less overtly, as source of a spiritual influx which even today is not exhausted. But this function, which is illustrated and encapsulated in his title 'Seal of Muḥammadan Sainthood', is not something which can be understood in some nebulous void unpeopled by men and women and devoid of any points of reference in space or time. Ibn ʿArabī's companions are not just walk-on parts, his contemporaries were not just onlookers, the countries which he lived in were more than theatrical backdrops, and the events he experienced were for him far more than the simple reversals in a dramatic plot. In this respect all the biographies of Ibn ʿArabī which were mentioned earlier share one major shortcoming. Not once do they try to delineate the cultural, social and political landscape in which his destiny unfolded, and never do they attempt to evoke the epoch, so rich and sumptuous but also so grave, into which he was born and in which he died: the era of the Reconquista in the West, the era of the Crusades and soon afterwards of the Mongol invasions in the East. It is quite true that works written about this period are extremely inadequate. Even today there is still no study which deals specifically with the Andalusia of Ibn ʿArabī's time—that is, with Andalusia under the Almohads. This means that anyone interested in discovering information which could help to shed light on Andalusian society during that period is obliged to consult the historiographical works written at the time. However, history as it was conceived of then is something very different from the discipline which bears the name today. Any attempt to find details about the living conditions of the general population in, say, Ibn al-Abbār's *Takmila* or Ibn ʿIdhārī's *Bayān al-*

mughrib is totally in vain. Their concern was not with writing history in the way this is understood today—let alone with sociology. Their aim was to transmit a very specific type of information regarding the key figures and the political and military events which in one way or another characterised their century.

The East under the Ayyūbids is slightly better documented. The studies by C. Cahen, E. Sivan and S. Humphreys carefully document the Ayyūbid system of government and its interactions with the Christian world. The doctoral thesis defended by L. Pouzet in 1981 assembles the historical data concerning religious life in Damascus during the seventh/thirteenth century. More recently, D. Gril's edition and translation of a seventh-century hagiographical text[38] provides invaluable information about the Sufi circles which existed in Egypt at that time. But a great deal still remains to be done, and I venture to express the hope that this book will contribute towards a better understanding of a period which witnessed such major upheavals in the Islamic world.

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My aim is essentially biographical. In the first instance it consists of retracing Ibn ʿArabī's spiritual and intellectual journey while, wherever possible, situating this journey firmly in the religious and historical context of the time. Within this framework there could be no question of undertaking a detailed analysis of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine and teaching. My intention has been much more modest: to contribute a little to clarifying the origin of his teachings and also to emphasise how closely they are related to the 'states' (*aḥwāl*) and 'stations' (*maqāmāt*) which he experienced, as well as to an already lengthy tradition which he inherited and in turn transmitted. Besides, the principal themes of his thought have already been the subject of meticulous examination for a number of decades. There is no need to go back as far as Nyberg or Asín: one has only to think of the work done by Corbin and Izutsu (and more recently by another Japanese scholar, Masataka Takeshita), or of the penetrating commentaries by Michel Vâlsan which accompany his translations, to gain an idea of the number of publications which have been devoted to deciphering the corpus of Ibn ʿArabī's writings—although of course this is not to say that the deciphering is even nearly complete. And yet for obvious reasons it has proved impossible to confine myself to simply citing these studies; frequently I found it essential to refer in passing to the main ideas which run through Ibn ʿArabī's work, although I make no claim to have done so exhaustively.

38. *La Risâla de Ṣafī al-Dīn Ibn Abī l-Manṣūr: biographies de maîtres spirituels connus par un cheikh égyptien du VII^e/XIII^e siècle*, introduced, edited and translated by Denis Gril, I.F.A.O. 1986.

'I only speak of what I taste,' states the author of the *Futūḥāt*.[39] In a sense his entire work is nothing but the record of his inner experience: visions, dialogues with the dead, ascensions, mysterious encounters in the 'Imaginal World' (*ʿālam al-khayāl*), miraculous journeys in the celestial spheres. Whether they are a psychopath's fantasies, as Asín Palacios believed, or genuine spiritual perceptions as Corbin claimed, the fact is that for Ibn ʿArabī they were not only as real but much more real than the Andalusian earth on which he walked as a child. Everyone who devotes himself to studying the Shaikh al-Akbar—whether as a biographer or as a historian of ideas—must take this into account.

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'It takes a saint to understand a saint,' wrote Julien Green about Francis of Assisi.[40] Indeed I make no claim to have understood—let alone made understandable—that elusive figure whose existence I will be describing. Many enigmas remain. In saying this I have in mind not so much those historical riddles for which some document, lost today, may tomorrow provide the answer, as those illuminations for which we can record both date and place but without being able to share in their light. I have in mind those contradictions which no doubt resolve themselves *sub specie aeternitatis*, but which from the terrestrial point of view remain unsolved; those certainties that are inaccessible to the reason of mortals, and the privilege of the *muḥaqqiqūn* or realisers of the truth. To the best of my ability I have followed Ibn ʿArabī down those strange trails that are not always contained within the four points of the compass. During the course of this journey one can sometimes feel one has lost one's way; sometimes one can feel a prisoner in a labyrinth from which there is no way out. But the Shaikh al-Akbar asserts that 'all paths are circular',[41] which among other things means that the journey which the reader is about to embark on will lead him back to himself.

39. *Fut.*, II, p.24; see also *Fut.*, IV, p.75.
40. Julien Green, *Frère François*, Paris 1982, p.86.
41. *Fut.*, III, p.65; *Risālat al-anwār*, p.12.

1. Home Land

'ANDALUSIA BELONGS TO GOD'

'You who live in Al-Andalus, with its waters, its shade, its rivers, trees—how blessed you are!
The Garden of Bliss is nowhere else than in your country, and if it was possible for me to choose between them it would be your country I would choose.
Don't be afraid of going to Hell tomorrow: whoever has known Paradise will never enter Gehenna.'[1]

COUNTLESS poets have sung the charms of the Andalusian countryside, with its green gardens, its rivers, its flowers, its fragrances and scents; these verses by Ibn Khafāja (*d.* 533/1139) are far from unique.[2] Andalusia, land of enchantment, land of Paradise—the native Arabic literature abounds with these enthusiastic eulogies. 'Andalusia and everything in it belongs to God', another poet declaims.[3] From statements such as these to making the prophet Muhammad say what he never said is just a small step; the Andalusians took that step by piously inventing some *ḥadīths*. 'After my death a peninsula will be conquered in the West; its name is Andalusia. Whoever lives there will live in a state of blessedness; whoever dies there will die a martyr . . . .'[4] Or again: 'God spread out the Earth before me and I was

1. Ibn Khafāja, *Dīwān*, Būlāq edition, p.72.
2. See further Henri Pérès, *Poésie andalouse en arabe classique au X^e siècle*, Paris 1937, chapters 2, 3 and 4.
3. *Dhikr bilād al-andalus li muʿallif majhūl*, ed. and trans. L. Molina, Madrid 1983, I, p.12 (Arabic text) and II, p.19 (Spanish translation).
4. This *ḥadīth* is cited by Zuhrī (6th/12th century) in his *Kitāb al-jaghrāfiya*, ed. M. Hadj Sadok in *B.E.O.*, Damascus 1968, XXI, p.226, and in *Dhikr*, I, p.16 and II, p.22; he does not, however, vouch for its authenticity. The anonymous author of the *Dhikr* also quotes another twenty or so '*ḥadīths*'; but he gives no chain of transmitters (*isnād*) and simply refers indiscriminately to Ibn Bashkuwāl, Muslim and so forth. On the fabrication and dissemination of this type of *ḥadīth*, extolling the virtues (*faḍā'il*) of towns and cities which did not even exist in the time of the Prophet, see I. Goldziher, *Études sur la tradition islamique*, Paris 1984, pp.153–57.

able to see how much of it my community would possess. I saw that Andalusia would be its final conquest. I asked Gabriel: "Gabriel, what is that peninsula?" He replied: "Muḥammad, that is the peninsula of Andalusia, which your community will conquer after your death. Whoever lives there will live in a state of blessedness; whoever dies there will die a martyr".'[5] Put together from bits and pieces, these '*ḥadīths*' testify just as much to the strength of sheer passion which the Arab conquerors felt for Andalusia as to the complete and utter absence of that scientific scrupulousness which the compilers were sometimes quite capable of.

Let us take a closer look at this land which became the inspiration for so many eulogists. It is common knowledge that by '*Al-Andalus*' Arabic writers meant not only the region equivalent to what is Spain today but also 'Islamic Spain irrespective of its geographical extension, which diminished bit by bit as the Christian reconquest proceeded'.[6]

During the Almohad Empire, which is the period that concerns us, *Al-Andalus* designated the provinces—or more accurately the *kūras*, according to the geographical terminology used by the Arabs—of Valencia, Tudmir (provincial centre Murcia) and Jativa in the Levant (*sharq al-andalus*); of Jaén, Elvira (near to Granada), Almeria and Malaga in the East; of Cordoba, Seville, Ecija, Carmona and Niebla to the West; in the South, Moron, Sidona, Calsena and Tacoranna (provincial centre Ronda), and in the Algarve (*gharb al-andalus*)—present-day Portugal—Osconoba (with Silves as its centre) and Beja.

Apart from some disagreement as to whether Spain should be situated in the fourth or fifth climate,[7] the fact is that Arab geographers followed each other closely in their descriptions of Andalusia and that there is not much difference between one account and another. The following example is also typical of the rest:

'Andalusia is a fertile peninsula, remarkable for the immense size of its lands and sea, for the great variety of its fruits and for its natural resources. It is favoured with a considerable population and enormous advantages. There are many wild animals, birds and fish for game. Its soil is good, its water drinkable . . .. Uninhabited regions are rare; fortresses and castles are everywhere. It also has a rich quantity of mines, of rock crystal, ore, sulphur, lead and tin.'[8] Add one further comment by the same author—'The inhabitants of Andalusia are more courageous and more difficult to govern than any other people; even the great Caesar himself . . .'—and the picture is complete!

5. *Dhikr*, I, p.18; II, p.25.
6. Lévi-Provençal, *Al-Andalus*, in *EI*² s.v.
7. See A.Miquel's article in *EI*² s.v. *iqlīm*.
8. *Dhikr*, I, pp.29–30; II, pp.35–6.

Stereotyped as it is, this idyllic description does none the less contain a substantial degree of truth. There is no denying that the regions of Cordoba and Seville—in particular the Aljarafe, the range of hills stretching to the West of Seville—and also the regions of the Levant and Algarve have been favoured by nature to a much greater extent than the rest of the Iberian peninsula. Abundantly watered by the Guadalquivir (*al-wādī al-kabīr*) and its tributaries (chief of which is the Guenil, *al-wādī al-sinjīl*), and perfectly irrigated from the Umayyad era onwards, the soil in these areas is fertile and favourable for the cultivation of fruits and vegetables. The Andalusians took special pride in the variety and abundance of the fruit; apples, pears, apricots, cherries, pomegranates and especially figs grew in profusion. The olive groves in Jaén, Malaga and particularly in the Aljarafe stretched into the distance as far as the eye could see; the Aljarafe was also a centre of intensive apiculture. As for the sea, it was a generous source of fish for the Andalusians, who were prodigious sardine-eaters.[9]

The complete absence of statistical data, plus the Arab geographers' lack of concern with demographical matters, renders impossible any serious attempt at estimating the population of Islamic Spain in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[10] On the other hand we are well informed as to the elements that went to make up this extremely mixed population.[11]

Those who were Arabs in the true sense of the word came for the most part from Syria and the Yemen, after the conquest. They represented a privileged and affluent minority and formed a closed caste, a nucleus of great families (*buyūtāt*) who owned the best land and most often occupied important administrative posts.

From the eleventh century onwards, as the Almoravids and then the Almohads came to power, the number of Berbers in Andalusia increased considerably. These nomads from North Africa were recruited *en masse* as mercenaries; disliked by Arabs and Andalusians, they were regarded as coarse and uncouth. The Almohad dynasty brought a change in their social status: previously confined to the lower classes, a large number of them now

9. On farming and natural resources in Andalusia see J. Bosch Vila, *La Sevilla islámica: 712–1248*, Seville 1984, pp.375–90; Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*, Paris 1967, III, pp.260–98 and *Al-Andalus* in *EI*²; Ibn ʿAbdūn, *Séville musulmane au début du XII*ᵉ *siècle*, trans. Lévi-Provençal, Paris 1947, pp.94–102; L. Bolens, *Les méthodes culturales au Moyen Âge d'après les traités d'agronomie andalous*, Geneva 1974.

10. On this problem see L. Torres Balbas, 'Extensión y demografia de las ciudades hispano-musulmanas', *Studia islamica*, III, 1955, p.35–9.

11. On the population of Andalusia see Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, III, pp.162–232; L. Torres Balbas, 'Mozarabías y juderías en las ciudades hispanomusulmanas', *Al-Andalus*, XIX, 1954, pp.172–97; F.J. Simonet, *Historia de los Mozarabes de España*, Madrid 1901.

took up judicial posts while others excelled in the religious sciences. We will also see that several of Ibn ʿArabī's spiritual masters came from this class of uneducated and illiterate Berbers.

Among these non-native elements in the population of Andalusia, mention should also be made of the existence of a small number of blacks from Sudan. Brought to Andalusia by the slave trade, they were for the most part employed as mercenaries.

The aboriginal population consisted of three groups. Statistically the most significant one was the *muwallads*, or Spaniards converted to Islam. Farmers, craftsmen and traders, they also made up most of the working population.

Then there were the Christians and Jews. Both were minority groups. There had been a major emigration of Christians to the north of Spain after Toledo was captured by Alphonso VI in 478/1085. However, a small nucleus of this Mozarab community stayed on in Andalusia. Under the Almoravids, and even more so under the Almohads, they were increasingly ill-treated and humiliated. The religious tolerance which had characterised the caliphate of Cordoba was no more than a distant memory. Admittedly times had changed: the Muslim realm in Spain was shrinking from day to day as the Reconquista continued to gain more ground. When ʿAbd al-Mu'min came to power, he declared that he would no longer tolerate anyone but Muslims on his territory; churches and synagogues were systematically destroyed.[12]

The situation was even worse for the Jews. In face of the Almohad persecutions many of them emigrated to Toledo or to the Maghreb—as for example in the case of Maimonides, who fled Cordoba in 544/1149 and took refuge first of all in the Maghreb and then in Egypt, where he died in 601/1204. Those who stayed on lived together in special quarters of the great cities. Especially in Granada, but also in Seville and Cordoba, they formed an important and prosperous community until 557/1162; but in that year the city was recaptured by the Almohads, and most of them were either killed or expelled.[13]

The manual of *ḥisba* ('inspection') by Ibn ʿAbdūn, written at the beginning of the twelfth century, provides a remarkable insight into the attitude of intolerance which was sweeping through Andalusia at that time. A magistrate at Seville, he used every possible opportunity to express his profound contempt for the *dhimmīs*, non-Muslims: 'It is forbidden', he writes,

12. Marrākushī, *al-Muʿjib*, Amsterdam 1968, p.223.

13. For the position of Jews and Christians under the Almohads see L. Torres Balbas, 'Mozarabías', pp.175ff and G. Vajda, 'À propos de la situation des juifs et des chrétiens à Séville au début du XII[e] siècle', in *REJ*, XCIX, 1935, pp.127–29; E. Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain*, Philadelphia 1979.

'to sell a coat which has belonged to a leper, a Jew or a Christian without disclosing the fact to the potential buyer . . .'.[14] Elsewhere he advises that 'no tax-collectors, policemen, Jews or Christians should be allowed to wear the dress of a member of the aristocracy, of a lawyer or of a man of means; on the contrary, they should be abominated and shunned . . .'.[15] And that is not all. According to Ibn ʿAbdūn, priests are fornicators and the churches are brothels! 'Members of the clergy are debauchees, fornicators and sodomites. Women Franks are to be forbidden to enter the church on any day except when there are services and on holy days, because it is their custom to go there to banquet, drink and fornicate with the clergy . . .'.[16] Finally, Jews and Christians must be absolutely forbidden to educate themselves and above all to act as tutors to Muslims.[17]

One other very special characteristic of Andalusia was the number of its towns, many of which dated from Roman times, and its fortresses. If the land may well have been a paradise, it was also highly coveted.

Whatever the views of lyrical eulogists as to the country's charms, the fact is that from the eleventh century and even more so from the twelfth century onwards *Al-Andalus* presents the picture of a landscape devastated by war. With the capture of Toledo in 478/1085 by Alphonso VI of Castile, and then of Saragossa in 512/1118 by Alphonso the Warrior of Aragon, the Reconquista —which had made little progress up until then—inexorably tightened its grip around the Islamic realm in Spain. Certainly the Almoravid Berbers from North Africa rallied to the cry for help from the *reyes de Taifas*, and still managed to hold the Christians in check beyond their frontier. But very soon they were to be crushed in turn by other Berbers—the Almohads. In 539/1145, with the conquest of Morocco and Ifriqiya scarcely completed, the Almohad troops landed in the Iberian peninsula under ʿAbd al-Mu'min, who had succeeded to the Mahdī Ibn Tumart in 527/1133. Two years later they took Jerez, Niebla, Silves, Beja, Mertola—and finally Seville, where the Almohads set up their administrative capital.

By the time of ʿAbd al-Mu'min's death in 558/1162 almost all of Andalusia had been conquered and subdued. The rebellions which flared up here and there in reaction to the abuses perpetrated by the rank and file of the Almohad army were rapidly put down. The famine and penury which had ravaged Seville were averted.

On his father's death Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf seized power, although only after eliminating a few rival candidates who were something of a nuisance. He inherited a vast empire which was prosperous and strong economically,

14. Ibn ʿAbdun, *Séville musulmane* p.112.
15. Ibid., p.115.
16. Ibid., p.109.
17. Ibid., p.128.

politically and also from a military point of view. But even so, a shadow darkened the scene. The shadow had a name: Ibn Mardanīsh.

'Demented and cruel': that is the image which the medieval Arab chroniclers liked to present of the Levantine sovereign, Muḥammad b. Saʿd Ibn Mardanīsh. The chroniclers in question were men such as Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt[18] (*d.* 594/1198) and Ibn ʿIdhārī[19] (*d. c*700/1300)—that is, men whose impartiality is to say the least open to question.[20] The verdict of the great Orientalist R. Dozy is quite different. He does not conceal his admiration for the great opponent of the Almohads, and observes that 'He liked to dress in the same way as his neighbours, the Christians, and carry the same weapons as they did; he liked to fit out his horses in the same way, and he took pleasure in speaking their language. Most of his soldiers were from Castile, Navarra and Catalonia; he had homes built for them—and a large number of taverns as well, which caused a major scandal among strict Muslims . . .. In every Christian prince he saw an ally, a friend, a brother . . .. He was a man of great shrewdness; he knew when to pardon with nobility and when to punish severely, according to the circumstances. He had prodigious energy and was an excellent horseman; his bravery was a match for any ordeal. In battle he was so ready to sacrifice himself and endanger his life that he had to be reminded that a general-in-command has other duties than those of an ordinary soldier'.[21]

With the assistance of Christian mercenaries Ibn Mardanīsh defied, harassed and menaced the Almohad Empire for nearly fifteen years. In 554/1159 he attempted to take Cordoba, then descended on Seville; encouraged and commanded by their future sultan Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf,[22] the inhabitants of Seville put up a resistance and after three days managed to repel the besieger. This did not prevent Ibn Mardanīsh and his troops from regularly ravaging the *campaña* of Seville during the years that followed; his ally and son-in-law

18. Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann bi l-imāma*, ed. ʿAbd al-Hādī Tāzī, Beirut 1964, II, p.407.

19. Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, Part Three, ed. Huici Miranda, Tetuan 1963, pp.40, 87, 95.

20. It is worth noting that in the places where Ibn ʿArabī mentions Ibn Mardanīsh he passes no judgement on him whatsoever: *Fut.*, II, p.452, *Muḥāḍarat al-abrār*, Cairo 1906, I, p.48.

21. R. Dozy, *Recherches sur l'histoire et la littérature de l'Espagne pendant le Moyen Âge*, third edition, Leiden 1881, I, pp.336–67.

22. Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf had been sent as governor to Seville by his father, ʿAbd al-Mu'min, in 551H. In 557/1161 ʿAbd al-Mu'min decided to make Cordoba the administrative capital of Andalusia, but he died soon afterwards; Abū Yaʿqūb, strongly attached to Seville, re-established it as the Andalusian capital of the Almohad Empire.

even succeeded in taking Granada in 557/1162, although admittedly only for a short time.[23]

However, in 560/1165 Ibn Mardanīsh had his first setback. The Almohad armies, reinforced by contingents from North Africa, crushed his troops not far from Murcia; he himself fled to Murcia for refuge. The capital of Tudmir, founded in 216/831 during the reign of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān II, was surrounded by high walls and strong fortifications which made it impossible for the Almohads to take the city by storm. So began a test of strength between the Almohad sovereign and the Levantine king which was to last seven years.

THE DESCENDANTS OF ḤĀTIM AL-ṬĀ'Ī

'I am al-ʿArabī al-Ḥātimī, the brother of magnanimity; in nobility we possess glory, ancient and renowned.'[24]

In the vast corpus of his writings it is not unusual to come across verses such as these in which the Shaikh al-Akbar, Muḥyī l-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿArabī al-Ṭā'ī al-Ḥātimī, celebrates his pure Arab origin and the legendary generosity associated with the name of his ancestors, the Banū Ṭayy'.[25] Arab[26] and of noble descent, Ibn ʿArabī's family belonged to the *khāṣṣa* or high society of Andalusia. Although it cannot be established conclusively, there is every reason to believe that part of the Yemenite clan of the Banū Ṭayy' emigrated to Spain during the initial years of the Arab conquest, which attracted several great families (*buyūtāt*) to the Iberian peninsula from Syria and the Yemen.[27] At any rate we know that already in the time of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān I (*d.* 172/788) some members of the clan were

23. On the capture of Granada by Ibn Ḥamushk and then by the Almohads see *EI*² s.v. *Gharnāṭa*; Dozy, *Recherches*, I, pp.367–88; Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, II, p.186.

24. *Dīwān*, Būlāq, 1271H., p.47; *Muḥāḍarat*, I, p.155.

25. See for example *Dīwān*, pp.44, 259, 308. It is important to note that the correct form of the Shaikh al-Akbar's *nasab* is in fact 'Ibn al-ʿArabī', although he is generally referred to as Ibn ʿArabī—no doubt to distinguish him from the *qāḍī* and *muḥaddith* who will be mentioned later on. One of his ancestors was the famous Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī, who became legendary for his chivalry and generosity: cf. *Muḥāḍarat*, I, p.259 and *EI*² s.v. Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī.

26. It must be remembered that according to the Arab system of kinship only the origin and descent of the father are significant (on this subject see P. Guichard, *Structures sociales orientales et occidentales dans l'Espagne musulmane*, Paris, La Haye 1977, chapter III, pp.102–36). This is the reason why Ibn ʿArabī considered himself a pure-bred Arab even though there is little doubt that he had some Berber blood from his mother's side of the family.

27. On emigration to Spain from Syria and the Yemen at the start of the conquest see J. Bosch Vila, *Sevilla islámica*, pp.24–43; Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*, I, pp.73–85.

settled in the city of Jaén; in his *Jamharat al-ansāb* Ibn Ḥazm noted their presence in Baza and Tijola, while Maqqarī gave their locality as southern Murcia—which is precisely where the Shaikh was born.[28]

It was in fact in precisely the year 560/1165, inside the fortress which was under siege and threat from the Almohads, that Ibn ʿArabī came into the world. In his own words, 'I was born during the rule of this caliph [i.e. Al-Mustanjid bi-llāh], in the realm of Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Saʿd b. Mardanīsh in Andalusia'.[29] When he met the historian Ibn Najjār (*d.* 643/1245) in Damascus, he gave him his exact time of birth as during the night of Monday the 17th of Ramadān, 560.[30] For his parents it was a major event: Muḥammad was and would remain their only son.[31]

What precisely was the position held by Ibn ʿArabī's father in Ibn Mardanīsh's government? To my knowledge none of our sources is specific on this point. However, it would appear that up until the time of Ibn Mardanīsh's downfall he was one of the high-ranking dignitaries in the realm. The Almohad sultan Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf retained in his own service the majority of his opponent's courtiers, and entrusted Ibn ʿArabī's father with what seems to have been a major post. This he continued to hold during the reign of the third Mu'minid sovereign, Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb al-Manṣūr.[32] One day he would be sharply criticised for his participation in power—which for some unavoidably meant participation in corruption—by one of Ibn ʿArabī's Andalusian masters.[33]

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that he was a luke-warm Muslim devoured by ambition and lust for power. There are some details regarding his death[34] which on the contrary suggest that he was—perhaps *in extremis*—one of the *awliyā'*, or saints, and more precisely that he was

28. Elías Terés, 'Linajes árabes en al-Andalus según la Jamhara de Ibn Hazm', *al-Andalus* 1952, XXII.2, pp.344–45. 29. *Muḥāḍarat*, I, p.48.

30. Maqqarī, *Nafḥ*, II, p.163.

31. Ibn ʿArabī frequently refers in his writings to the various members of his family (his father, his mother and his two sisters), but never does he make even the slightest allusion to a brother. We will also see that when his father gathered the family together just before his death, it only consisted of Ibn ʿArabī himself plus his mother and two sisters.

32. Al-Qārī al-Baghdādī (*d.* 821/1418) states in his *Manāqib Ibn ʿArabī*, p.22, that Ibn ʿArabī's father was the vizier to the sultan of Seville (in other words of the Almohad sultan). However, the assertions made by this writer need to be treated with caution: they are more often than not exaggerated, if not downright false. But apart from this report, it emerges clearly from two passages in the *Rūḥ al-quds* and *Durrat al-fākhira* that Ibn ʿArabī's father was in the service of the Almohad rulers: cf. *Rūḥ*, p.108 with R.W.J.Austin's translation, *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.114, and *Durra* § 3, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.75–6.

33. *Rūḥ*, pp.108–9; *Sufis of Andalusia* § 16, p.114.

34. We will see later that he died in about 590/1194, when Ibn ʿArabī was thirty years old.

'among those who have realised the "Dwelling-place of Breaths" ' (*man taḥaqqaqa bi manzil al-anfās*).[35] This category of spiritual men is also designated by the Shaikh al-Akbar as *al-raḥmāniyyūn*, because they are governed specifically by the divine name *al-Raḥmān*, 'the Merciful',[36] which is a reference to the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet: 'The Breath (*nafas*) of the Merciful comes to me from the Yemen'.[37] They are characterised by the ability to perceive spiritual and sense-perceptible realities through the sense of smell (*al-shamm*). To quote Ibn ʿArabī: 'One of the distinguishing features of someone who has attained to this station (*maqām*) is the fact that at the time of his death he is declared alive even though he is dead; but if his pulse is taken, he is declared to be dead . . ..

'I experienced this in the case of my father, God have mercy on him. For a while we hesitated to bury him, so closely did he resemble a living person by the expression on his face, even though by the cessation of his pulse and breathing he resembled someone who was dead.

'A fortnight before his decease he had told me he was about to die, and that his death would take place on a Wednesday. So it was. On the day when he died he was seriously ill. He sat up without any support and said to me: "My child, today is the day of departure and meeting". I replied: "In this journey God has written your salvation, and in this meeting He has blessed you". He was delighted by these words, and he said to me: "May God reward you! My child, *everything that I heard you say and which I did not know and at times reproved you for: that is my profession of faith*" (*huwa dhā anā ash-haduhu*). Then a white glow appeared on his forehead—in contrast to the colour of the rest of his body—but it caused him no pain; it was a radiant light which my father was able to see. This glow then spread over all his face and finally covered the whole of his body.

'I embraced him, bade him farewell and, as I was leaving, said: "I am going to the Great Mosque; [I will remain there] until I am brought news of your death". He replied: "Go, and do not allow anyone to come and see me". Then he called his wife and daughters to his side.

'At midday I was told he had died; I went to him and found him in the state in which one wondered on seeing him whether he was alive or dead. It was in this condition that he was buried.'[38]

35. Ibn ʿArabī describes this category of spiritual men in chapters 24, 34 and 35 of the *Futūḥāt*. For the idea of *nafas raḥmānī* in the writings of the Shaikh al-Akbar see H. Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, pp.115–20; Suʿād al-Ḥakīm, *al-Muʿjam al-ṣūfī*, § 614.

36. *Fut.*, I, p.214.

37. *Fut.*, I, p.185. This *ḥadīth* is cited by Ibn Ḥanbal (II, 541) with the variant *nafas rabbikum* instead of *nafas al-raḥmān*.

38. *Fut.*, I, p.222.

On his own admission, Muḥyī l-Dīn's father did not always share his son's sense of religious vocation or his certainty in matters of doctrine. None the less he felt a certain pride in the face of spiritual talents which were so remarkable that they attracted the praise of his friends—for example of Averroes, who requested that he arrange a meeting with the exceptional child; we will come back to this famous episode later. As for Ibn ᶜArabī himself, there can be no doubt that he suffered inwardly as a result of his father's reserved attitude towards him (and also towards Sufism, *al-taṣawwuf*)[39] and one day he took him to a great saint in Cordoba, whom he asked to pray for him.[40] But whatever their disagreements in matters of opinion, when they were confronted with the danger of death only tenderness remained. Muḥyī l-Dīn recounts how 'One day I became seriously ill and plunged into such a deep coma[41] that I was believed to be dead. In that state I saw horrible-looking people who were trying to harm me. Next I became aware of someone—kindly, powerful, and exhaling a delightful fragrance—who defended me against them and succeeded in defeating them. "Who are you?", I asked. The being replied to me: "I am the sūra *Yā-Sīn;* I am your protector!". Then I regained consciousness and found my father—God bless him—standing at my bedside in tears; he had just finished reciting the sūra *Yā-Sīn*.'[42]

In Ibn ᶜArabī's family his predisposition had no lack of antecedents. Three at least of his uncles—Abū Muḥammad ᶜAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-ᶜArabī al-Ṭā'ī on his father's side, and Abū Muslim al-Khawlānī and Yaḥyā b. Yughān on his mother's—were distinguished for their spiritual aspirations.

It was clearly the first of these—Abū Muḥammad al-ᶜArabī—who made the most profound impression on the young Muḥammad. Later he would describe his remarkable experience three times, in the *Rūḥ al-quds*,[43] the

39. In his *Risāla* (for the correct identification of this text see below, chapter 5), edited by H. Taher in *Alif* 5, 1985, Cairo, p.30, Ibn ᶜArabī mentions a disapproving remark by his father about the behaviour of Shaikh ᶜAbd al-ᶜAziz al-Mahdawī, one of the spiritual masters he frequented in Tunis.

40. *Rūḥ*, § 20, p.115; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.123. The saint in question was none other than Abū M. Makhlūf al-Qabā'ilī, whose name will crop up again later in connection with the famous 'Cordoba vision' in 586H.

41. Possibly this episode occurred in 571–72 during the terrible plague which first ravaged Morocco and then Andalusia (cf. Ibn ᶜIdhārī, *Bayān*, III, pp.109–10; Huici Miranda, *Historia política del Imperio almohade*, Part I, Tetuan 1956, p.274); at the time Ibn ᶜArabī was twelve years old.

42. This passage is missing in the Būlāq edition (1329H.) of the *Futūḥāt*, but it occurs both in the edition of 1293H (IV, p.648) and in the *Kitāb al-waṣāyā* — which is in fact a separate edition of the final chapter of the *Futūḥāt* — Beirut, n.d., p.150. It will be remembered that tradition recommends recitation of the sūra *Yā-Sīn* for the dying.

43. *Rūḥ*, § 13, p.98; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.99–100. This same uncle is also mentioned in the

Durrat al-fākhira[44] and the *Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*.[45] This man is a typical example of that frequent phenomenon in the history of sainthood everywhere in the world: the literal 'conversion'—suddenly and abruptly—of a person who up until that time had shown no real inclination towards piety and asceticism. The event in question, related in detail by Ibn ᶜArabī in his *Rūḥ*, occurred when his uncle was already well advanced in years.

One day a young boy came into the pharmacy in which the old man happened to be sitting and asked him for a remedy. The uncle made a sarcastic remark in response to the boy's ignorance in pharmaceutical matters. His youthful interlocutor was clearly someone who was spiritually advanced beyond his years, and he retorted that whereas his own ignorance of drugs was of no consequence the old man would, on the contrary, pay dearly for his heedlessness and stubborn disobedience with regard to God. The effect of the retort was immediate and devastating. The man placed himself in the service of the child and dedicated himself to God up until the time of his death, which occurred three years later. Ibn ᶜArabī states in the *Durra* that during that period he attained a high degree of sainthood. In the chapter of the *Futuḥāt* which is devoted to the category of 'spiritual men whose hearts are attached to breaths' (*ahl al-qulūb al-mutaᶜashshiqa bi-l-anfās*) — apparently identical to the category his father belonged to—Muḥyī l-Dīn actually specifies that his paternal uncle ᶜAbd Allāh b. M. al-ᶜArabī possessed this station (*maqām*) on both the sense-perceptible and the spiritual plane (*ḥissan wa maᶜnan*). This is confirmed by the following anecdote in the *Rūḥ:* 'Sitting at home he often used to say: "Dawn is breaking". One day I asked him, "How do you know that?". He replied: "Child, from His throne God sends a breath which blows from Paradise; it descends from there at dawn so that every true believer inhales it every day".'[46]

Finally, it is worth noting that Ibn ᶜArabī refers to his uncle's death as occurring before his own 'entry into the Way' or, to use the expression he himself commonly used, during the period of his *jāhiliyya*, or 'ignorance'.[47] This means, as we will see, that it happened before 580H.

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preceding biographical sketch, where Ibn ᶜArabī declares that he belonged to the élite of spiritual men: *Rūḥ*, p.96; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.96.

44. Only one manuscript of the shorter version of the *Durrat al-fākhira* appears to survive (the longer version is lost), and unfortunately I have not been able to consult it. However, R.W.J. Austin provides a partial translation of it in *Sufis of Andalusia*; the biographical sketch of Ibn ᶜArabī's uncle is on pp.99–100.

45. *Fut.*, I, p.185.

46. Tādilī (*d.* 627/1230) describes an identical phenomenon in the case of Abū Yaᶜzā. Cf. *Tashawwuf*, ed. A. Tawfiq, Rabat 1984, § 77, p.216.

47. *Rūḥ*, p.98; *Sufis of Andalusia* p.99; *Fut.*, I, p.185.

Equally interesting and rather similar is the case of another member of his family: his maternal uncle, the prince Yaḥyā b. Yughān al-Ṣanhājī (*d.* 537H),[48] who was the ruler of Tlemcen. This man's remarkable story is preserved in three texts: in Ibn ᶜArabī's *Futūḥāt*[49] and *Muḥāḍarat al-abrār*,[50] and in the *Tashawwuf*[51] by Yūsuf b. Yaḥyā al-Tādilī (*d.* 627/1230).

Of these three versions it is the one in chapter 73 of the *Futūḥāt* which provides the most detailed and complete account of the circumstances which led up to that fine morning when the Berber prince abandoned his throne and his possessions in order to dedicate himself body and soul to God. In this chapter the Shaikh al-Akbar is enumerating and defining the various categories of *awliyā'*; in the passage in question he is describing the category of ascetics (*al-zuhhād*)—those who of their own free will have renounced the goods of this base world,[52] 'who have preferred God (*al-ḥaqq*) to His creatures (*al-khalq*)'.[53]

'One of my maternal uncles (*baᶜḍu akhwālī*) was one of these ascetics (*zuhhād*). He was the ruler of Tlemcen and his name was Yaḥyā b. Yughān. During his time there was a man called Abū ᶜAbd Allāh al-Tunsī:[54] a jurist, a deeply religious person and a hermit (*ᶜābid munqaṭiᶜ*) who came originally from Tunis. This man had settled in a place called al-ᶜUbbād, just outside Tlemcen. He had isolated himself in a mosque, in which he devoted himself to the worship of God. His tomb is still to be found there; it is famous and frequently visited.

'One day this saintly man was walking in Tlemcen, between Aqadabir and the town centre, and my uncle Yaḥyā b. Yughān, the king of Tlemcen, surrounded by his retinue and followers, crossed paths with him. He was told: "There is Abū ᶜAbd Allāh al-Tunsī, the holy man of our age!" The king reined in his horse and stopped; he greeted the old man, who greeted him back. The king, who was magnificently dressed, asked him: "Shaikh, is it permitted for me to do my prayers in the clothes I am wearing?" The old man burst out laughing. "What are you laughing at?", the king demanded. He replied: "At

48. *Tashawwuf* § 19, pp.123–24. 49. *Fut.*, II, p.18. 50. *Muḥāḍarat*, II, p.67.

51. *Tashawwuf* § 19, pp.123–24. It is worth noting that the story also occurs in the *Bughyat al-ruwwād* by Yaḥyā Ibn Khaldūn (brother of the famous historian who was assassinated in 780/1379), ed. and trans. A.Bel, Algiers 1903, p.31.

52. In principle someone is considered a *zāhid* if he possesses goods which he then voluntarily renounces. As for the person who is poor and without possessions and who renounces the acquisition of material goods, Ibn ᶜArabī explains that there is a divergence of opinion among the Masters: some consider him a *zāhid*, others do not.

53. *Fut.*, II, pp.17–18.

54. According to Tādilī, *Tashawwuf*, p.123, this was Abū M. ᶜAbd al-Salām al-Tunsī, of whom he gives a biographical sketch elsewhere (§ 13, pp.110–13).

the pettiness of your understanding, at the ignorance of your soul, and at your state! Nothing resembles you more closely than a dog which wallows in the blood of a carcass and devours the flesh in all its uncleanliness, and then lifts its paw when it pisses so as not to soil itself. You are a bowl filled with dirt. You ask me about your clothes while you are responsible for all the injustice that your subjects are suffering!" The king burst into tears, dismounted from his horse and there and then renounced his kingdom. He placed himself in the service of the shaikh, who put him up for three days but then came to him carrying a piece of rope and said: "King, the three days of hospitality which are prescribed have passed; get up and go and collect wood".

'So it was that he started gathering wood, carrying it on his head and taking it to the market; there the people wept when they saw him. He would sell the wood, take what he needed to feed himself and distribute the rest in alms. He stayed in his town doing this until he died; he was buried alongside the shaikh [Abū ᶜAbd Allāh]. The shaikh had the habit of saying to people who came to him to ask him to intercede with God on their behalf: "Go and ask Yaḥyā b. Yughān; he is a king who renounced his kingdom. If God had subjected me to such a test, perhaps I would not have abandoned my kingdom!" '[55]

In the *Muḥāḍarat al-abrār* Ibn ᶜArabī adds that one day he made a pilgrimage to ᶜUbbād to meditate at the graves of his uncle Yaḥyā and of Abū Madyan, who many years later would be buried in the same place.[56]

So here, too, we are faced with a spectacular case of *tawba*, of a sudden and unexpected conversion: a new awareness violently shakes the individual and brings him to a total metamorphosis of his being. Is the story too good to be true? The dialogue between the prince and the ascetic presents one of the most familiar situations in hagiographical literature all over the world: dramatic confrontation, instantaneous transformation of the sinner. It is difficult not to see in this one of those rhetorical formulae which are a common element of every golden legend. But Ibn ᶜArabī, who was so careful in describing the innumerable stages and many perils of the Path, was not at all prone to theatrical simplifications. At the very least we must assume that he transcribed a family tradition just as he heard it; and we must not forget that a *metanoia* which strikes like lightning may be a rare phenomenon, but it is by no means simply impossible.[57] In this connection it is worth noting

55. *Fut.*, II, p.18.

56. *Muḥāḍarat*, II, p.68; he must therefore have made the journey some time between 594—the date of Abū Madyan's death—and 598, which was when he left for the East for good.

57. Similarly Shaᶜrānī, in a biographical sketch of his ancestor Shaikh Mūsā Abū ᶜImrān, who was a disciple of Abū Madyan, states that he renounced the throne which he was destined to inherit from his father (*al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, Cairo 1945, II, pp.20–21).

that Tādilī's version—more succinct but similar in its essential details—contains no reference to texts by Ibn ᶜArabī (of which he apparently had no knowledge), but is based on an oral tradition received from one of his contemporaries. This would suggest that the story of the prince of Tlemcen's sudden conversion was told independently in this form and that—whether historical or legendary—it was this particular version of the events which continued to be propagated.

It was also in similar circumstances that, as we will see, the process of *rujūᶜ*—of return to God—was triggered in Muḥyī l-Dīn: suddenly, and according to some sources during a high-society evening. The fact that there were two precedents for this in the family is not insignificant.

Finally there was his maternal uncle, Abū Muslim al-Khawlānī, who according to Ibn ᶜArabī belonged to a different category: the class of devotees (*al-ᶜubbād*). The *ᶜubbād*, distinguished by him from the *zuhhād*, are explained by him as being men of legal obligations (*ahl al-farā'iḍ*). Some of them live cut off from other men, while others have chosen to remain among them. They are free from greed and lust but, he specifies, 'they do not perceive either the divine objects of knowledge and the divine secrets or the subtle spiritual world (*al-malakūt*), and they are not favoured with immediate understanding of the verses of the Qur'ān. However, at every instant they contemplate Retribution (*al-thawāb*), Resurrection and the terrors it entails, Paradise and Hell . . ..

'My maternal uncle Abū Muslim al-Khawlānī was one of the greatest of their kind. He would stay standing in prayer all night long, and when his strength started to fail him he would hit his legs with sticks which he kept specifically for this purpose and say to them: "You deserve more blows than my horse does. If the companions of Muḥammad believe they will have the prophet all to themselves then, by Allāh, we will push them up around him until they realise they have left behind them men (*rijāl*) who are worthy of the name".'[58]

Raḥmāniyyūn, zuhhād, ᶜubbād: definitely there was no lack of spiritual vocations in Ibn ᶜArabī's family. What about his mother? His writings seem not to contain even the slightest allusion which would help us to form at least an approximately accurate picture of her personality. However, she is mentioned twice in the *Rūḥ al-quds*. From the first passage it emerges that Ibn ᶜArabī was an obedient son who was extremely respectful towards his mother: a normal attitude for a Muslim, a fundamental one for a saint.[59] From the second passage we learn that his mother died shortly after his

58. *Fut.*, II, p.18.

59. *Rūḥ* § 18, p.111; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.118. This account tells how Ibn ᶜArabī asked permission of his mother to go to Rota. We will see later that he made this journey in approximately 590H, which means that at the time he was about thirty years old.

father, and that from then on Muḥyī l-Dīn was obliged to become the sole provider for his family; as we will see, this was to provoke a few family conflicts.[60] However, a reference in the *Futūḥāt* does reveal that his mother assiduously frequented Fātima bint Ibn al-Muthannā, who was one of Ibn ᶜArabī's spiritual masters.[61] At the very least this suggests an orientation on her part towards Sufism, the *taṣawwuf*.

To complete this family picture one final person needs to be mentioned: Abū l-Walīd Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-ᶜArabī. By some he has been identified with one of Ibn ᶜArabī's paternal uncles, but I believe this identification is wrong. Whenever it is a case of the three uncles already mentioned, Ibn ᶜArabī specifically states his bond of kinship with them by referring to them as *khāl* (meaning a maternal uncle) or *ᶜamm* (in the case of a paternal uncle). However, no such designation occurs in the various passages where Ibn ᶜArabī quotes Abū l-Walīd al-ᶜArabī in connection with certain *ḥadīth*s which this man had transmitted to him.[62] On the grounds of his *nasab* 'al-ᶜArabī', O. Yahia[63] and subsequently R. Austin[64] have drawn the conclusion that in him we have yet another paternal uncle of Ibn ᶜArabī. This is hardly likely: apart from the absence of the term *ᶜamm*, we must also not forget that there was another *bayt al-ᶜArabī* in existence in Andalusia at this time, which as it happens consisted of the parents and descendants of the famous *qāḍī* Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn al-ᶜArabī (*d.* 543/1148), who was a celebrated expert in *ḥadīth*.[65] What is more, when we turn to the long list of masters in the religious sciences which Ibn ᶜArabī enumerates in his famous *Ijāza li-l-Malik al-Muẓaffar*, we read that 'Another of my masters was Abū l-Wā'il b. al-ᶜArabī; from him I received the *Sirāj al-muhtadīn* of the *qāḍī* Ibn al-ᶜArabī, who was his cousin; he also transmitted *ḥadīth*s to me from him, and gave me an *ijāza* (authorisation)'.[66] Finally, when Ibn ᶜArabī refers to this same

60. *Durra* § 3, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.74–5.

61. *Fut.*, II, p.348.

62. *Fut.*, I, p.32, where Ibn ᶜArabī specifies that he met him in Seville in 592H in his home; *Rūḥ*, preface, p.22 (this section of the book is not translated by Austin in *Sufis of Andalusia*); *Mishkāt al-anwār*, Cairo edition, 1329H, § 14, p.15.

63. *Histoire et classification*, I, p.95.

64. *Sufis of Andalusia*, introduction, p.29.

65. Regarding this person see *EI²* s.v.; V. Lagardère, 'ᶜAbū Bakr b. al-ᶜArabī, grand cadi de Séville', *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 40, 1985, 2, pp.91–102.

66. *Ijāza li-l-Malik al-Muẓaffar*, ed. Badawī in *Quelques figures et thèmes de la philosophie islamique*, Paris 1979, p.177. It should be noted that this edition is incomplete and inaccurate in several places: see the review by G. Vajda in *Arabica*, II, January 1956, p.93.

transmitter in the *Mishkāt al-anwār* he applies to him the *nisba* 'al-Maᶜāfirī', which belongs to the *qāḍī*'s family but not his own.[67]

So the first eight years of Ibn ᶜArabī's childhood were spent behind the high walls of this small independent kingdom—the final bastion of anti-Almohad resistance. Situated on a plain on the banks of the river Segura (*wādī shakūra*), Murcia and its surrounding region enjoyed a fertile and rich soil, with gardens, orchards and farmed land everywhere which enabled the population to provide for its own needs. But this prosperity was to be of short duration. War was approaching, bringing in its wake famine and misery. In 563/1168 Abū Yaᶜqūb Yūsuf, who had proclaimed himself *Amīr al-muᶜminīn*, signed peace-treaties with the kings of Leon and Castile.[68] A year later Ibn Ḥamushk, son-in-law and right hand man of Ibn Mardanīsh, deserted his father-in-law and rallied to the cause of the Almohads. From then on the Mu'minide sultan could engage all his forces in the final assault against the ruler of the Levant. He would no doubt have launched the assault straight away if certain events had not intervened to thwart his plans. In that year (565H) there was an earthquake in Andalusia; Cordoba, Seville and Granada were severely hit, Murcia seemed to have been miraculously spared.[69] But Abū Yaᶜqūb also suffered a more personal setback: at the very same time the Almohad sultan fell seriously ill in Marrakech. It would take almost two years for him to recover. As soon as he was better he returned to Seville; there he gathered his troops and threw them against Ibn Mardanīsh who, defeated and wounded, took shelter one more time behind the walls of Murcia. There, if we are to believe the chronicles, his madness unleashed itself. He tortured his companions, assassinated his sister and drowned his children, immured his two viziers alive and—to the great relief of those close to him—finally breathed his last in Rajab 567H.[70]

His sons left immediately for Seville to pledge their allegiance to the Almohad ruler, and took with them several of the city's notables. Was the father of Ibn ᶜArabī included in the delegation? Very probably he was. In any case, in 568H Ibn ᶜArabī's family left Murcia once and for all and settled in the capital of Andalusia, where his father entered the service of the sultan Abū Yaᶜqūb.[71]

The young Ibn ᶜArabī was confronted with a spectacle which was at once

67. *Mishkāt* § 14; in this case the difference in *kunya* (Abū l-Walīd in *Fut.*, I, p.32 and *Rūḥ*, p.22, Abū l-Wā'il in *Ijāza*, p.177) is to be explained as an error or incorrect reading in the MS. of the *Ijāza*.

68. Ibn ᶜIdhārī, *Bayān*, III, p.78.

69. Bosch Vila, *Sevilla islámica*, p.257; *Bayān*, III, p.84.

70. *Bayān*, III, pp.87, 95.

71. *Nafḥ*, II, p.162.

fascinating and disturbing. Except perhaps for its innumerable gardens and fountains, Seville bore little resemblance to the introverted and reclusive city of Murcia. It was a gigantic city, overpopulated, swarming with people, noisy, gaudy. Arabs mixed with Berbers and Andalusians, Muslims with Christians and Jews; the most distinguished jurists kept company with poets and philosophers; the most depraved of libertines rubbed shoulders with the greatest of saints. It was a city of great—almost irresistible—temptation.

'IN THE TIME OF MY SINFUL YOUTH'

WHEN Francis of Assisi—that other saint of the Mediterranean who died roughly ten years earlier than the Shaikh al-Akbar—referred to the tumultuous and turbulent period which preceded his dramatic conversion with the expression 'in the time of my sinful youth', it is quite clear what he meant. But what exactly did Muḥyī l-Dīn mean when, evoking the same period in his life, he spoke of the 'time of my *jāhiliyya*'—using a term which in the history of Islamic civilisation is a traditional way of referring to the period of 'ignorance', of paganism, that precedes the coming of Islam? Is it because, like many others, he succumbed to the irresistible attractions of Seville—that 'fiancée' of whom so many poets have sung eulogies?[72]

Cordoba and Seville were always rivals. Although in the first few centuries after the Islamic conquest preference was given to Cordoba, she was finally outmatched by Seville. With the coming of the Almohad dynasty, and especially under the reign of the second Mu'minid king Abū Yaᶜqūb Yūsuf, Seville experienced her hour of glory. She owed this economic and political supremacy to the fact that she held two major trumps: the Guadalquivir, whose right bank skirts the Andalusian capital, and the Aljarafe which stretches off to the west of the city.

The river Guadalquivir—which has its source at Cordoba—is compared time and time again by Arab writers with the Nile, the Tigris or even the Euphrates. With its port and shipyards it was Seville's most important economic centre of activity and the city's chief artery of communication. Countless different kinds of merchandise—grains, coal, cotton, oil—were brought there by boat, some intended for import, others for export; so were all sorts of travellers, both foreign and native.[73] However, even in spite of the surveillance maintained by the *amīn* who, along with his aides, was responsible for ensuring respect for the law and the maintenance of good

72. On the poets who have celebrated the charms of Seville see H. Pérès, *Poésie andalouse*, pp.134ff.

73. Regarding the Guadalquivir cf. J. Bosch Vila, *Sevilla islámica*, pp.206–16.

behaviour, the Guadalquivir was also a place of debauchery. Wine, music and women were able to circulate more freely than anywhere else—much to the indignation of Ibn ᶜAbdūn, who wrote: 'Bargemen should not allow across a woman who looks like a woman of bad living . . .. There must be an absolute ban on women organising pleasure outings and drinking parties along the river, especially when they deck themselves out in all their finery'.[74]

According to the poets the Guadalquivir was the necklace of the 'fiancée', and the Aljarafe her diadem. It was there that all the agricultural production of the Seville region was located, along a stretch of twenty or thirty miles: olive groves, fields of cotton and grains, orchards and so on.[75]

When emigrants such as Ibn ᶜArabī's family disembarked in Seville in 568H they discovered a city undergoing rapid expansion. In the year before, the sultan Abū Yaᶜqūb Yūsuf, enchanted by the Andalusian capital, had initiated a series of large-scale building projects which were to change the urban landscape considerably. First of all he decided to construct a bridge connecting the two banks of the Guadalquivir—in other words linking Seville to Triana, the port for the Aljarafe—and so facilitate both communication and commerce between the city and the surrounding countryside.[76] In the same year he ordered his architects to build a group of small palaces on the outskirts of Seville; known as '*buḥayra*', they were surrounded by vast gardens, orchards and fields of olive trees brought from the Aljarafe.[77] Also in the year 567H, he drew the plans for a great mosque to replace the mosque of Ibn ᶜAddabās which had been damaged in the last earthquake and which was in any case too small to accommodate the growing population of Seville. According to Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt the mosque—whose famous minaret, the 'Giralda', still survives—was completed in 571H; strangely, however, it was only inaugurated in 577/1182.[78] But of all the projects undertaken by the king, the most useful for the inhabitants of Seville, even if not necessarily the most prestigious, was the restoration of the ancient Roman conduit system. As a result the entire population of the city was supplied with drinking water. The inauguration of the Seville water reservoir on the 15th of Jumādā II, 567/1172, provided the occasion for a grand ceremony attended by the sultan and all of the city's top dignitaries.[79] Seville witnessed a prosperity and splendour she had never known before.

74. Ibn Abdūn, *Séville musulmane*, pp.127–28.
75. For the Aljarafe see *Sevilla islámica*, pp.333–39.
76. Ibid., pp.159, 271.
77. Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt, *al-Mann*, II, pp.464–67.
78. Ibid., II, pp.474ff.
79. Ibid., II, pp.468ff; *Sevilla islámica*, pp.229–31.

However, what must have been the most fascinating aspect of the city for a visitor was the strange mixture of austerity and luxury, of piety and debauchery, which seemed to impregnate Seville. To begin with, the Almohad movement was essentially religious.[80] The disciples of the Mahdī Ibn Tumart had defined their mission as being to restore a pure and rigorous Islam, to purge the decadent morals of the Andalusians and to re-establish the true *tawḥīd*, or pure monotheism. The Almohad State was a theocratic state in which religion governed all one's daily actions. ᶜAbd al-Mu'min was faithful to his master's way of thinking and applied the doctrine of the Mahdī without any leniency. A very pious man himself, and naturally inclined to asceticism, he was severe in punishing any deviation from Qur'ānic law. Alcohol was strictly forbidden; anyone who failed to perform the required prayers was considered a renegade; Jews and Christians either had to convert to Islam or leave.[81]

His son and successor, Abū Yaᶜqūb Yūsuf, was well-versed in theology and could boast that he knew the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*, or collections of prophetic Traditions, by heart. But he had an inquiring and sophisticated mind, and was equally interested in medicine, philosophy and astrology, surrounding himself with famous individuals such as Ibn Ṭufayl, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Zuhr.[82] In the words of the author of the *Muᶜjib*, 'He knew better than anyone else the language of the Arabs, their battles, their achievements and their history, both before and after the coming of Islam; he devoted himself to the study of all this while he was the governor of Seville . . .. There was no one more skilled than he in reciting the Qur'ān, no one who was faster in solving a grammatical problem, no one more expert in philology. As a king he was firm, energetic, generous and magnanimous . . .. Consequently his nobility of soul and his lofty aspirations prompted him to learn philosophy . . .. In short, neither before nor after him was there a king among the Mu'minids to compare with Abū Yaᶜqūb'.[83] After due allowance is made for exaggeration, we are left with the picture of a man whose education and interests were not limited to the narrow sphere of the religious sciences *stricto sensu*.

Following the example of their new king, the Almohads gradually

80. Regarding the Almohad State cf. R.le Tourneau, *The Almohad Movement in North Africa in the twelfth and thirteenth Centuries*, Princeton 1969.
81. Regarding Abd al-Mu'min cf. *EI²* s.v.; Huici Miranda, *Historia del imperio almohade*, I, pp.209–217; *Trente-sept Lettres officielles almohades*, ed. Lévi-Provençal, Rabat 1941, esp. letter 23, dated 556/1160, pp.126–38.
82. For Abū Yaᶜqūb cf. *EI²* s.v.; Marrākushī, *Muᶜjib*, pp.170–88; Huici Miranda, *Historia*, I, pp.303–312.
83. *Muᶜjib*, pp.170ff.

succumbed to the seductive refinements of Andalusian society in general, and of Seville society in particular. Seville was a melting pot. Every possible race and religious denomination came together, as did the most diverse of talents: singers, poets and musicians mixed with *ʿulamāʾ* and philosophers. Debauchery and asceticism, depravity and sainthood were the two different faces of the 'fiancée'. Ibn ʿArabī certainly experienced the second; was there a time when he was also on close terms with the first?

As the son of a noble and rich family, Muḥyī l-Dīn's years of adolescence were peaceful and carefree. He seems not to have attended the Qur'ānic school, where according to Ibn ʿAbdūn the teachers were ignorant and the teaching mediocre.[84] He no doubt had private tutors in his own home, like any other son born into high society. Anyway, one thing we know for certain is that he studied the Qur'ān with 'a man of the Path', Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Khayyāṭ, to whom he would always remain deeply attached. As he says in the *Rūḥ*: 'When I was a child I studied the Qur'ān with him [i.e. Abū Abd ʿAllāh al-Khayyāṭ] and had a great affection for him; he was our neighbour . . .. Of all the spiritual men I have met since returning to the Path, there is not one of them I have wanted to be like—except for him and his brother'.[85] Many years later, during his journey to the East, Ibn ʿArabī would meet up again with the Khayyāṭ brothers in Cairo and spend an unforgettable month of Ramaḍān together with them.[86]

Of those Sufis whom Ibn ʿArabī knew as a child, mention must also be made of Abū ʿAlī al-Shakkāz. He was closely linked in friendship with his paternal uncle, Abū Muḥammad al-ʿArabī, and would subsequently become one of his spiritual teachers.[87]

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In the annals of Seville 574/1178 was a black year. The Guadalquivir—up until then a source of riches and prosperity—now became the cause of desolation and loss. The river burst its banks, flooded the countryside and devastated the crops.[88] The peace treaties signed in 568–69H with the kings of Leon, Castile and Portugal had expired; the king of Portugal, Alphonso

84. *Séville musulmane*, pp.54–5.

85. *Rūḥ*, §§ 9 and 10, p.93; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.92 and, for the sketch in the *Durra*, p.94. See also *Muḥāḍarat*, II, p.31.

86. *Rūḥ*, p.93; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.91.

87. *Rūḥ*, § 12, pp.96–8; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.96–8, where Ibn ʿArabī states that he continued to visit him from the time of his entering the Path down to Abū ʿAlī al-Shakkāz's death.

88. *Sevilla islámica*, p.215; *Bayān*, III, p.112.

Enriquez, sent his son Sancho to attack Seville. The two armies came face to face near the Aljarafe; the Almohads were routed.[89]

But none of this seems to have troubled the easy and comfortable existence of Muḥyī l-Dīn, judging from his silence about these events. Occasionally he accompanied his father on his trips[90] and made his entry into Andalusian high society; he was promised a position as scribe to the governor of Seville.[91] His destiny seemed traced out for him: he would follow in the footsteps of his father . . ..

But the teenager felt drawn in a different direction. He had a presentiment of certain inner spiritual needs, but still hesitated to take the crucial step. This was the period of his *jāhiliyya*: the period in which the young Ibn ʿArabī remained divided between his desire to enjoy the good things of this low world and his desire for God; the period when he had a vague apprehension of the Truth but did not yet know it in its fullness. It was not that he really disobeyed God; he simply gave Him the minimum. As he confesses at the start of the *Rūḥ*: 'As the night drew to an end my wicked companions and I went off to get some sleep because we were exhausted after all the dancing (*wa qad taʿibnā min kathrati mā raqaṣnā*). We would go off to our beds just as the hour for the dawn prayer was approaching. We would then perform the smallest possible ablution—anything less would not have deserved the name 'ablution' at all—and might perhaps go to the mosque. But most of the time on such occasions we chose instead to perform the prayer at home by reciting the sūra *al-Kawthar*[92] and the *Fātiḥa* . . .. Occasionally, when I was feeling better disposed than the others, I would perform my ablutions and go to the mosque. If when I got there I was told that the prayer had finished, that gave me no cause for sorrow; precisely to the contrary . . .. If I happened to arrive in time to perform the prayer behind the imām, one of two things occurred. Either I was completely absorbed in thinking about the marvellous night I had just spent listening to an excellent musician declaiming some fine verses: in this case I would spend the entire prayer rehearsing the same thoughts over and over again until I no longer knew what the imām was praying or which prayers he had recited, but simply saw people doing something and imitated their gestures . . .. Alternatively sleep would start to overcome me, and in that case I would keep watching the imām to see if he had finished the prayer; the lengthy recitations became unbearable and inside myself I would start cursing him: "There he goes, off on the sūra *al-Ḥashr* or the *Wāqiʿa*!

89. Huici Miranda, *Historia*, I, p.278.

90. *Fut.*, IV, p.540.

91. Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Takmila*, ed. Codera, Madrid 1889, § 1023; Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī, *al-Dhayl wa l-takmila*, ed. Iḥsan ʿAbbās, VI, p.494.

92. Sūra 108, the shortest in the Qur'ān.

Couldn't he have made do with the *al-Infiṭār* or the *al-Fajr*?[93] Didn't the Prophet himself recommend that prayers be kept short?" '[94]

This confession is too precise, too realistic to be simply a case of the kind of literary artifice which aims—as so often in conventional accounts of 'conversion'—at producing an edifying contrast between the 'before' and the 'after'. It helps to shed some light on the state of mind of the youthful Muḥyī l-Dīn, and on the contradictory feelings that moved him. He admired his old uncle who one fine morning left the pharmacy to devote himself to God; he revered Abū ᶜAbd Allāh al-Khayyāṭ, with whom he was discovering the mysteries of the Qur'ān, and secretly he dreamed of one day being like this saintly man. And yet at the same time he would not renounce—at least not yet—those long nights of music in the company of his friends. He was *jāhil*, ignorant; he had not yet taken the plunge. And yet, if we restrict ourselves solely to the reliable sources of information which are available to us, it appears that Ibn ᶜArabī's *tawba* was not a sudden renunciation of a life of debauchery. This period of *jāhiliyya* from which he was to emerge seems to have been no more than a phase of *ghafla*: of heedlessness or 'distraction'.

93. The sūras *al-Infiṭār* (82) and *al-Fajr* (89) are short, the *al-Ḥashr* (59) and *al-Wāqiᶜa* (56) are long.

94. *Rūḥ*, p.42.

2. Vocation

'WHEN GOD CALLED ME TO HIM'

WHEN? How? Why? These are the questions the 'ordinary' man asks himself every time he is confronted with the case of an individual who, all of a sudden, chooses God.

Sometimes he has a detailed autobiographical account, such as Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, to help him find the answers. But even in the most favourable circumstances, even in the case of a completely 'naked' account which has managed to stay free from the pious conventions to which this literary genre so often falls a victim, is that enough for us to fathom the inmost depths of a soul and understand this strange, disconcerting course of events? Most of the time, as if to force us to follow him down the same path he has already trodden, the saint keeps silent and history remains dumb. This, in effect, is what has happened in the case of Ibn ᶜArabī:[1] his writings offer nothing in the way of a systematic account, including dates, of the stages of his conversion. However, among the thousands of pages that make up his work, he often happens to corroborate a point of view he has just been elaborating on by citing his own spiritual experience. On those occasions he allows extremely valuable autobiographical details to slip out in a few brief words or phrases. By gathering these scattered pieces of information and supplementing them with the reports of his disciples and his biographers, an attempt can be made to provide the answers to the questions posed above.

In those passages from his books in which Ibn ᶜArabī refers—explicitly or implicitly—to his 'return to God', one notes immediately the recurrence of certain key terms: *khalwa* ('retreat'), *fatḥ* ('illumination'), *mubashshira* or

1. Although he describes—often several times over—many of the episodes belonging to the later phase of his spiritual destiny, in his writings Ibn ᶜArabī remains very reserved about the circumstances and the motives behind his 'conversion'. The more detailed information which he gave his disciples orally (and which I will be making use of) in my opinion rules out the hypothesis of deliberate reticence.

sometimes *wāqiᶜa* ('vision'), *tawba* ('conversion') and *rujūᶜ* ('return').[2] These terms represent so many asymmetrical pieces which, once brought together and arranged in a coherent manner, will allow us to reconstruct a plausible account of the successive phases in Ibn ᶜArabī's 'return to God'.

One of the most famous passages in the *Futūḥāt* provides the answer to the question, 'When?'. This is the passage which describes the notorious meeting between Ibn ᶜArabī and Averroes. O. Yahia, on the basis of another passage in the *Futūḥāt* where Ibn ᶜArabī mentions the date 580/1184 in connection with his 'entering the Path', places this interview between the saint and the philosopher in around the same year.[3] However, the account in question contains certain details which appear to contradict such an assumption. Ibn ᶜArabī describes how 'One fine day I went to Cordoba to visit the *qāḍī* Abū l-Walīd Ibn Rushd (Averroes). He wanted to meet me, as he had heard of the illumination which God had granted to me during my retreat (*mā fataḥa llāh bihi ᶜalayya fī khalwatī*); he had expressed amazement on learning what he had been told about me. My father was one of his friends, and accordingly sent me to him on the pretext of doing some errand or other, although his real purpose was to allow him to speak with me. At that time I was still just a boy (*ṣabiyyun*) without any down on my face or even a moustache (*mā baqala wajhī wa lā ṭarra shāribī*) . . .'.[4]

Muḥyī l-Dīn was therefore an adolescent who was hardly older than fifteen at the most. If, as O. Yahia supposes, the meeting with Averroes occurred in 580, he would have been twenty years old—and no doubt his growth of hair would have been much more pronounced. This makes it extremely improbable that the famous interview took place any later than 575/1179. No doubt it will seem amazing that someone as important and renowned as Averroes—a man who was confidant and personal physician to the sultan Abū Yaᶜqūb Yūsuf, and who at that particular time held the position of *qāḍī* at Cordoba[5]—should have requested an interview with a youth who for his part claimed to be a confidant of Heaven. But the Arab biographers would not have been too surprised: according to them Averroes was a very modest man, and above all someone who had a curiosity and thirst for knowledge that were never satisfied. As Ibn al-Abbār (*d.* 658/1260) wrote about him: 'Never

2. *Khalwa: Fut.*, I, p.153; III, p.488; *fatḥ: Fut.*, I, pp.153, 616; *mubashshira/wāqiᶜa: Fut.*, II, p.491; IV, p.172; *tawba: Fut.*, II, p.49; III, p.49; *rujūᶜ: Fut.*, II, pp.491 and 548; IV, p.172; *Rūḥ*, p.98.

3. O.Yahia, *Histoire et classification*, I, p.94.

4. *Fut.*, I, pp.153–54.

5. Regarding Averroes cf. Marrākushī, *Muᶜjib*, pp.174, 175, 224; Ibn al-Ḥasan al-Nubāhī, *Taᶜrīkh quḍāt al-andalus*, Beirut 1983, p.111; *EI²* s.v. Ibn Rushd; E. Renan, *Œuvres complètes*, Paris 1949, III, chapter 1.

has Andalusia known a man as perfect, as learned and as virtuous as he was. Noble though he was, there was no one more humble and more modest than he. From his earliest years to the time of his death he devoted himself to learning. It is even said of him that never in his life did he stop his reflections or his reading except on the night when his father died and on his wedding night . . .. He concerned himself with the knowledge of the Ancients and in this matter was the guide of his time. His advice was sought in medicine as well as in jurisprudence, not to mention his competence in syntax and in literature.'[6]

So it emerges from Ibn ᶜArabī's own testimony that at this period he had already obtained illumination (*fatḥ*) during a retreat (*khalwa*).[7] *Fatḥ* is a term which in its etymological sense means 'opening', but which is used in the technical vocabulary of Sufism to indicate the spiritual opening or illumination that marks acquisition of a higher 'station' in one's spiritual journey; ordinarily it is only obtained after a long period of initiatic discipline (*riyāḍa*).[8] It is interesting to note that in his *Risālat al-anwār* Ibn ᶜArabī warns novices specifically about the premature acquisition of *fatḥ*: 'Before entering into retreat you must first have submitted yourself to initiatic discipline; that is, you must have purified your character, renounced carelessness, and made yourself capable of enduring whatever does you wrong. Someone in whom illumination precedes the practice of initiatic discipline will not—save in exceptional cases—attain to spiritual virility'.[9] In fact Ibn ᶜArabī himself was plainly one of these 'exceptional cases': for him, according to his very own words, *fatḥ* preceded *riyāḍa* (*qad taqaddama fatḥī ᶜalā riyāḍatī*).[10] In other words what happened to him was an experience of *jadhba*, of being snatched out of oneself in ecstasy,[11] and was not the outcome of a *sulūk*—of a methodical advance, step by step, along the Way that leads to God. We will come back to this point later.

But all this tells us nothing at all about what actually pushed him, young

6. Ibn al-Abbār, *Tak.*, Codera edition, § 853.

7. For the notion of *khalwa* in Ibn ᶜArabī see chapters 78 and 79 of the *Futūḥāt* and his *Risālat al-anwār* (Hyderabad 1948), which is translated and analyzed by Michel Chodkiewicz in *The Seal of the Saints: Prophecy and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ᶜArabī*, trans. L. Sherrard, Cambridge 1993, ch. 10.

8. For the notion of *fatḥ* in Ibn ᶜArabī see his *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya* (where he uses the form *futūḥ*), Hyderabad 1948, p.11, § 103; *Fut.*, IV, p.220.

9. *Risālat al-anwār*, Hyderabad 1948, p.5; *Seal of the Saints*, p.152. It will be noted that in this passage Ibn ᶜArabī also advises novices only to enter into retreat after first having practised *riyāḍa*, which is clearly not what happened in his own case.

10. *Fut.*, I, p.616.

11. For the notion of *jadhba* see Emir Abd el-Kader, *Écrits spirituels*, trans. Michel Chodkiewicz, Paris 1982, introduction, p.24.

man as he was, to withdraw from the world. On this point Ibn ᶜArabī's own writings remain stubbornly silent, and it is elsewhere that we need to look to find the answer. The only one of his biographers who seems to have addressed the problem is a writer who lived considerably later than him: al-Qārī al-Baghdādī (*d.* 821/1418). As was noted earlier, all the statements in this author's *Manāqib Ibn ᶜArabī* need to be treated with considerable caution. A fervent supporter of Ibn ᶜArabī, he was determined to convince his reader at all costs of the orthodoxy and sainthood of the Shaikh al-Akbar, and to this end he did not hesitate (in entirely good faith, no doubt) to falsify texts so as to make them say what they do not say.[12] However, as this is the only account which appears to exist, I quote it for what it is worth: 'He [Ibn ᶜArabī] was among those who are sons of princes and of the great ones of this world; his father was the minister to the master of Seville, the sultan of the Maghreb. A prince who was one of his father's friends invited him to dinner, along with other sons of princes. When the shaikh Muḥyī l-Dīn and the others were all present they ate to repletion, and then the goblets of wine began circulating. When it came to the turn of the shaikh Muḥyī l-Dīn, he grabbed the goblet and was just about to drink when he heard a voice call out to him: "Muḥammad, it was not for this that you were created!" He threw down the goblet and left in a daze. When he arrived at the door to his home he met the vizier's shepherd, dirty and dusty as usual. He had him accompany him to the outskirts of the town and swapped clothes with him. Then he wandered for a long while until he arrived at a cemetery which lay alongside a stream. He decided to stay in the cemetery; in the middle of it he discovered a tomb in ruins, which had turned into a cave. He entered it and starting practising the invocation (*dhikr*), only coming out at the hours of prayer. The shaikh [Ibn ᶜArabī] has said: "*I stayed four days in that cemetery. I then came out with all this knowledge [which I now possess]*" '.[13]

There is one other piece of evidence which seems to coincide with the end of this account in Baghdādī's *Manāqib;* but it is considerably more reliable, because it derives from one of the closest disciples of the Shaikh al-Akbar. In a small treatise entitled *Kitāb wasā'il al-sā'il,*[14] Ismāᶜīl b. Sawdakīn al-Nūrī (*d.* 646/1248) scrupulously gathered together the remarks made by his master and the advice he received from him during their private discussions. In this work he records that Ibn ᶜArabī said to him: 'I went into retreat before dawn (*al-fajr*) and I received the illumination (*fatḥ*) before the sun rose (*qabla ṭulūᶜ*

12. In particular, notable differences have been pointed out between Baghdādī's version of the texts of certain chroniclers and the texts themselves.

13. *Manāqib Ibn ᶜArabī*, p.22.

14. The text has been edited by Manfred Profitlich, *Die Terminologie Ibn Arabis im 'Kitāb wasā'il al-sā'il': Text, Übersetzung und Analyse*, K. Schwarz Verlag, Freiburg-im-Breisgau 1973.

al-shams). After the *fatḥ* I obtained . . .[15] during the morning, along with other stations. I remained in this place for fourteen months, and so it was that I obtained the secrets which I wrote about afterwards. My *fatḥ* at that time was a state of being snatched out of myself in ecstasy (*wa kāna fatḥī jadhbatan fī tilka l-laḥẓa*).'[16]

Is this fourteen-month retreat the same as the one which, according to al-Qārī al-Baghdādī, took place in a cemetery and lasted four days? Whatever the answer may be, the fact is that all three accounts—the one in the *Futūḥāt*, the one in the *Manāqib* and the one in the *Kitāb al-wasā'il*—refer to an illumination received during a retreat; furthermore, the reports of both Baghdādī and Ibn Sawdakīn specify that during the course of this period of seclusion Ibn ᶜArabī acquired the knowledge and the secrets which he subsequently divulged in his writings. Now if we turn back to the autobiographical account of the meeting with Averroes, and in particular to the dialogue that took place between them, we note that for an adolescent (*ṣabiyy*) Muḥyī l-Dīn seems indeed to have already been in possession of immense knowledge which confounded even the philosopher: 'As I entered, the philosopher rose from his seat and came to meet me, showing me every possible token of friendship and consideration and finally embracing me. Then he said to me: "Yes". I in turn replied to him: "Yes". Then his joy increased as he saw that I had understood him. But next, when I myself became aware of what it was that had caused his joy, I added: "No". Immediately Averroes tensed up, his features changed colour and he seemed to doubt his own thoughts. He asked me this question: "What kind of solution have you found through illumination and divine inspiration? Is it just the same as what we receive from speculative thought?" I replied to him: "Yes and no. Between the yes and the no spirits take flight from their matter and necks break away from their bodies". Averroes turned pale; I saw him start to tremble. He murmured the ritual phrase, "there is no strength save in God", because he had understood my allusion.'[17]

Before leaving the subject of this decisive retreat, one final piece of evidence remains to be cited which is hardly less trustworthy than the evidence just mentioned. It is the account which Mu'ayyad al-Dīn Jandī (*d.* approx. 700/

15. The text is incomprehensible.

16. *Kitāb wasā'il*, p.21.

17. The translation of this passage is based on the version by Henry Corbin (cf. *Creative Imagination*, pp.41–2). At first sight this dialogue between Ibn ᶜArabī and Averroes, as quoted by Corbin, seems enigmatic, and Corbin himself offers no interpretation. However, as Michel Chodkiewicz noted during a seminar at the École des Hautes Études in 1986, a reading of the pages directly preceding this particular passage indicates quite clearly that the subject of debate between the philosopher and the young saint was the question of the resurrection of the body.

1300)—author of a famous commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*—received from his teacher Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnāwī (*d.* 672/1274), who was a disciple and step-son of Ibn ᶜArabī: 'He [Ibn ᶜArabī] withdrew from the world at the start of his vocation, at Seville in Andalusia, for a period of nine months, and during this time did not break his fast. He went into retreat at the beginning of Muḥarram and was instructed to come out of it on the day of the *ᶜĪd al-fiṭr*....'[18]

Do these three testimonies (Baghdādī, Ibn Sawdakīn, Jandī)—of which it is important to remember that only one, Ibn Sawdakīn's, is direct—all refer to one and the same retreat or to several quite distinct retreats which took place at different points in time? As far as the *khalwa* alluded to by Jandī is concerned, one detail at the end of the text and which we will come back to in a later chapter suggests that it refers specifically to a retreat undertaken by Ibn ᶜArabī at Seville in 586H—that is, a considerable time after his entry into the Way. As for the accounts given by Baghdādī and Ibn Sawdakīn, in spite of the discrepancy regarding the period of duration it would seem that both of them are descriptions of the very first *khalwa* undertaken by the young Muḥyī l-Dīn: a retreat that took place some time before his encounter with Averroes, and during the course of which he became aware that he had obtained not only *fatḥ* but also—in a synthetic sense, no doubt—all of the sacred sciences which he would later expound in his writings. However, it is important to emphasise that throughout his life Ibn ᶜArabī undertook innumerable retreats;[19] certain people such as Dhahabī, whose interpretations are never exactly benign, were of the opinion that these seriously affected his mental health.[20] This means we must allow for the possibility that the two accounts refers to two separate retreats which were among the earliest that Ibn ᶜArabī undertook.

Whatever the case may be, one certain fact emerges in the light of these various texts. This is the fact that the very first stage in Ibn ᶜArabī's spiritual journey consisted of an immediate *fatḥ* or illumination, or more precisely of a *jadhba*, the state of being drawn out of oneself in ecstasy as the result of a divine intervention which is direct and abrupt; and that he obtained this illumination straightaway and without any prior effort during the course of a retreat—very probably in the same cemetery in Seville in which, as we will see later, he would continue isolating himself many years later.

18. Jandī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Ashtiyānī, Mashhad 1982, p.109. The *ᶜĪd al-fiṭr* is the festival of breaking the fast of Ramaḍān.

19. He often alludes in his writings to such-and-such a retreat that he had performed; as we will see, he increased the frequency of these *khalwa*s in the year 586H.

20. Dhahabī, *Mīzān al-iᶜtidāl*, Beirut 1963, III, p.659. It is worth noting that Asín Palacios shared Dhahabī's opinion: cf. *Islam cristianizado*, pp.68, 79, 101, 105.

However extraordinary and dazzling it may be, if a sincere spiritual vocation is to avoid ending in failure it must inevitably pass at some time through the stage of *tawba*, conversion. Whereas *fatḥ* and *jadhba* arise independently of the will of the *walī*, or saint, *tawba* is a voluntary and conscious act of repentance and the firm desire to return to God and put an end to one's state of distraction. Here history encounters metahistory, for it was in the presence of Jesus, his real 'first teacher', that Ibn ᶜArabī claims he underwent conversion: 'It was at his hands', he states in the *Futūḥāt*, although without dating the event, 'that I was converted (*ᶜalā yadihi tubtu*); he prayed for me that I should persist in religion (*dīn*) in this low world and in the other, and he called me his beloved. He ordered me to practise renunciation (*zuhd*) and self-denial (*tajrīd*)'.[21] Elsewhere he says again about Jesus: 'He was my first teacher, the master through whom I returned to God (*shaykhunā al-awwal alladhī rajaᶜnā ᶜalā yadayhi*); he is immensely kind towards me and does not neglect me even for an instant'.[22] The mutual affection and the privileged relationship which were established from the very start between Ibn ᶜArabī and the prophet ᶜĪsā—who according to Islamic tradition will return to earth at the end of time to re-establish peace and justice by acting in conformity with Islamic law—are not just accidental; as we will see later, there is one fundamental point which they shared in common. But even if this was not so, it would still be surprising—in view of the frequency and extreme explicitness of these references to ᶜĪsā and to his role as 'first teacher'—that Henry Corbin missed the significance of the relationship, insisting instead on making Khaḍir the 'initiator' of the Shaikh al-Akbar. The intervention of Khaḍir was certainly very real. However, it occurred much later and was considerably less decisive.

Reinforced in his conviction by the continual encouragement he received from Jesus, Muḥyī l-Dīn redoubled his efforts and finally decided to renounce the luxury in which he found himself and to strip himself of his possessions, just as his supernatural teacher had prescribed. Ibn ᶜArabī explains that, when a disciple has no family to provide for, he strips himself of all his possessions and entrusts them to his *shaikh*, if he has one. 'So it was that I myself stripped myself of everything that belonged to me; *however, at that time I had no [terrestrial] teacher to whom I could entrust my affairs and hand over my possessions.* I accordingly turned to my father and, after consulting with him, gave him everything I possessed. I did not appeal to anyone else because *I did not return to God through the intermediary of a teacher, for at that time I knew none.* I parted from my possessions just as a dead man is parted from his family

21. *Fut.*, II, p.49; cf. also *Fut.*, II, p.365, IV, p.77, and *Dīwān al-maᶜārif*, MS. Fatih 5322, f° 214.

22. *Fut.*, III, p.341.

and from all he owns. When I consulted with my father concerning the matter, he asked me to return everything to him, and I entrusted to him all I had. Never did I subsequently ask him what he had done with it.'[23]

Two essential points emerge from this account. Firstly, Ibn ʿArabī clearly specifies at the start of the text that the obligation of stripping oneself of one's possessions only applies to someone who has no family to provide for. This makes it difficult to suppose that Ibn ʿArabī himself would have acted any differently and that he would have disposed of his fortune if he had a wife to look after at the time. However, Asín Palacios asserts—without giving the slightest reference—that Ibn ʿArabī was married at an early age to Maryam bint Muḥammad b. ʿAbdūn in Seville.[24] To my knowledge this is neither stated nor even suggested in any source at all or in any text of Ibn ʿArabī. On the contrary, he declares in the *Futūḥāt*[25] that for the first eighteen years after entering the Way he fled from women: 'Of all men, there was no one who felt greater aversion for women and for sexual union than I did, starting from the moment when I entered the Way and for the eighteen years that followed'. It is perfectly possible that Ibn ʿArabī only contracted a marriage after his arrival in the East, at Mecca in 598H, where a number of people from the Maghreb—including the Banū ʿAbdūn—were temporarily resident. The second important point is that Ibn ʿArabī states specifically that at the time when he parted with his possessions he had as yet not encountered any teachers of the Way. Considering that—as we will see—he began frequenting masters in 580/1184 at the latest, we can conclude that this episode occurred at an earlier date, when he was not yet twenty years old.

This gesture of total renunciation marks a decisive turning-point in the destiny of Ibn ʿArabī; he had chosen the path of poverty and renunciation and would never turn from it. From that time on through to the end of his days his only means of subsistence would be the gifts and alms which he received from his companions on the Way and from some princely families once he had settled in the East.[26] For him it was a matter of realising pure servitude (*al-ʿubūdiyya al-maḥḍa*), which demands of the *walī* or saint that he abandon all rights and all possessions that might keep alive in him the illusion of *rubūbiyya*, of sovereignty. Furthermore, the things he owns exert by that very

23. *Fut.*, II, p.548.
24. Asín Palacios, *Islam cristianizado*, p.37.
25. *Fut.*, IV, p.84.
26. It will emerge later that Ibn ʿArabī was on very close terms with several Ayyūbid sovereigns, and in particular with al-Malik al-Ẓāhir of Aleppo and al-Malik al-ʿĀdil of Damascus. In Anatolia, the Seljuq king Kaykā'ūs accommodated him for several years. At Damascus he was also to be maintained by the great Shāfiʿite *qāḍī* Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn Zakī in the *turbe* where he would later be buried.

fact a right over him, and so their ownership secures in a certain sense the *ʿubūdiyya*, the servitude, which is due to God alone: in the words of the Shaikh al-Akbar, 'every servant of God over whom someone exerts a right falls short in his servitude to the extent of that right'.[27] In short, he who possesses nothing is possessed by nothing save God. As Ibn ʿArabī himself writes: 'Ever since the moment when I attained to this station [of pure servitude] I have possessed no living creature and not even the clothes I wear, for I only wear the clothes that are lent to me and that I am authorised to use. If I happen to come into possession of something I part with it at once, either by giving it away or by freeing it in the case of a slave. I made this commitment when I wanted to realise supreme servitude (*ʿubūdiyyat al-ikhtiṣāṣ*) in relation to God. I was told at the time: "That will not be possible for you as long as one single being has the right to demand something of you." I replied: "God Himself will not be able to demand anything of me!" I was asked: "How could that be?" I replied: "Demands are only made of those who deny [their ontological poverty], not of those who recognise [it]; of those who claim to be possessors of rights and goods, not of he who declares "I have no right, no share in anything!" '[28]

The youthful Muḥyī l-Dīn's efforts and zeal were soon rewarded with a vision in which he saw himself under the protection of Jesus, Moses and Muḥammad. This spiritual event was, as we will see later, of major significance in the process of Ibn ʿArabī's conversion. Fortunately we possess two autobiographical accounts of it, contained in two short and as yet unpublished treatises: the *Dīwān al-maʿārif* and the *Kitāb al-mubashshirāt*.[29]

In the first of these texts, Ibn ʿArabī provides a concise but comprehensive version of what happened. During this vision, he explains, while Jesus urged him on yet again to asceticism (*zuhd*), Moses announced to him that he would obtain the knowledge called *'Ladunnī'*: the very same knowledge which the Qur'ān (18:65) attributes to that interlocutor of Moses whom Islamic tradition calls by the name of Khaḍir. As for the prophet Muḥammad, he advised him to follow him step by step: 'Hold fast to me and you will be safe!' (*istamsik bī taslam*).

In the *Kitāb al-mubashshirāt*, on the other hand, we have an account which although only partial is also very detailed; in addition, it contains some chronological references. As its title (*The Book of Visions*) suggests, this short work is a record by Ibn ʿArabī of certain visions of his which he thought could be useful to others. The passage that concerns us occurs in the first section, which deals with the subject of attachment to *ḥadīth* (*al-tamassuk bi-l-ḥadīth*).

27. *Fut.*, I, p.196. 28. Ibid.
29. *Dīwān al-maʿārif*, ms. Fatih 5322, f° 214; *Kitāb al-mubashshirāt*, ms. Fatih 5322, f° 90b.

'During the period when as yet I knew nothing of learning (*qabla an aᶜrif al-ᶜilm*), some of my companions had planned to encourage me to study books of *ra'y*;[30] at the time I was completely ignorant of this science as well as of *ḥadīth*. In my sleep I saw myself in a huge space, surrounded by armed people who intended to kill me; there was nowhere at all where I could find refuge. Then I saw in front of me a hill on which the Messenger of God was standing. Immediately I took refuge beside him; he opened his arms wide and pressed me very forcefully against himself, saying: "My beloved, *hold fast to me and you will be safe*!" I then looked around me to see my assailants, but there was no longer a single one of them to be seen. From that time onwards I gave myself to the study of *ḥadīth*.'

In this account one notes immediately that Jesus and Moses are absent. However, this omission is nothing surprising: in the preface to the treatise Ibn ᶜArabī promises specifically to convey only as much of these visions as contains a teaching which will be useful to anyone and everyone, and to remain silent about what is just of personal concern to himself (*wa mā yakhtaṣṣu bi dhātī falā aḥtāj ilā dhikrihi*).[31] The text also confirms—although further confirmation is hardly needed—that Ibn ᶜArabī's conversion occurred much earlier than 580H. To be more specific, Ibn ᶜArabī himself states that at the time when he experienced this vision he had no knowledge at all of *ḥadīth*; but, as we will soon see, starting from 578/1182—and possibly even earlier—he applied himself very intensively to the study of *ḥadīth*.

Two passages in the *Futūḥāt* highlight the importance in Ibn ᶜArabī's eyes of this triple prophetic intervention: for him, his conversion to God really dates from that particular point in time. Hence his statement in the *Futūḥāt* that 'My return to the Way was accomplished through a vision under the guidance of Jesus, Moses and Muḥammad'.[32] Elsewhere he writes, without giving any further details: 'It was as a consequence of this vision that I returned to God'.[33]

After this conversion—pleasing to Heaven, as it would seem—came the most painful and most perilous test: 'abandonment' (*al-fatra*). In Islamic prophetology this term is used to designate the period of 'divine silence' which separates the coming of two prophets. In the technical vocabulary of Sufism, *fatra* refers to a period of inescapable 'slackening', of *acedia*, when the

30. Recourse to *ra'y*, 'individual opinion', in matters of *fiqh* or law is practised chiefly by the Ḥanafites.

31. *Kitāb al-mubashshirāt*, f° 90.

32. *Fut.*, IV, p.172.

33. *Fut.*, II, p.491.

spiritual man feels himself somehow abandoned by his Lord[34] and fears that this state of abandonment could be permanent: for sometimes He remains silent forever. In Ibn ᶜArabī's own words: 'Know that I received this verse[35] from God as an invocation (*dhikr*) *when He called me to Him*, and that I responded to His call. I practised it for a time, and then came a period of "abandonment" (*fatra*). This is the "abandonment" which is well known in the Way of the men of God; it inescapably befalls everyone who travels the Path. When it strikes, one of two things happens: either it is followed by [a return to] the initial state of adoration and spiritual effort (*mujāhada*), which is the case for those men of divine Providence (*ahl al ᶜināya al-ilāhiyya*) whom God protects, or for others the *fatra* persists and never leaves them: they will never succeed. When the state of "abandonment" took possession of me and dominated me, I saw God in a vision (*wāqiᶜa*).[36] He recited to me these verses: "It is He who sends the winds announcing His Mercy..." (Qur'ān 7:57). I understood that these verses were a reference to me, and I said to myself: "By means of them He is indicating my initial success through which God guided me under the protection of Jesus, Moses and Muḥammad, peace be upon them".'[37]

So Ibn ᶜArabī emerged victorious from this ordeal to which many before him had succumbed. Strengthened by a divine vision, he was able to follow the path that would lead him to the pinnacle of sainthood.

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To summarise briefly, but also as precisely as possible, what on the basis of the documentary evidence already cited can be inferred as to the probable sequence of events in Ibn ᶜArabī's 'conversion': as a fifteen-year old teenager

34. Regarding *fatra*, cf. *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, p.8, § 66, where Ibn ᶜArabī defines the term as the 'extinction of the fire which from the start had been consuming' (*khumūd nār al-bidāya al-muḥriqa*). It should be emphasised that the Prophet himself experienced such an 'abandonment'. For a period of time—ranging from fifteen to forty days according to the commentators—Gabriel stopped visiting him and the Revelation was temporarily interrupted, until the verse was revealed to him: 'Your Lord has not abandoned you or taken an aversion to you' (Qur'ān 93:3). Cf. Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, Tehran, n.d., XXXI, p.209.

35. i.e. 'The good earth produces vegetation with God's permission' (Qur'ān 7:58).

36. In *Fut.*, II, p.491, Ibn ᶜArabī explains that *waqā'iᶜ* (plural of *wāqiᶜa*) are annunciatory visions (*mubashshirāt*) and constitute the beginning of divine revelation (*awā'il al-waḥy al-ilāhī*); they come from the depths of the being (*min dākhil*) and from the man's essence (*min dhāt al-insān*). He goes on to specify that by some they are received in sleep, by others when they are in the state of extinction (*fanā'*), and by yet others when they are awake. In the *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, p.12, § 111, he defines a *wāqiᶜa* as that which enters the heart in some form or other from the other world.

37. *Fut.*, IV, p.172.

he was dividing his time between studying the Qur'ān in the company of a 'man of the Way' and his nocturnal 'distractions' in the company of his mischievous comrades, when God abruptly called him to order. Shaken, he fled and for a while withdrew far from the world. During this voluntary seclusion he received illuminations and spiritual knowledge. He then submitted to *tawba* or conversion at the hands of Jesus, who commanded him to strip himself of his possessions. As he had not yet met any worldly teacher to whom he could attach himself, he abandoned his possessions to his father and found himself received under the protection of Jesus, Moses and Muḥammad. But he would still have to undergo *fatra*, the crossing of the desert; after he had done so God received him and welcomed him among His own.

In a sense Ibn ʿArabī arrived at the goal of spiritual realisation straight away. Following the example of the *majdhūb*, the 'ecstatics', he burned all the stages and in one single leap completed the journey of the Quest. But how can someone who has not confronted the dangers, faced his adversaries and traversed each of the stages one by one possibly claim to be a guide to others? Accordingly Ibn ʿArabī was obliged to make the journey again, step by step: to perform the wayfaring or *sulūk* patiently and enter truly on the Way.

ENTERING THE WAY

'HOLD fast to me!', the prophet Muḥammad had said to Ibn ʿArabī. To hold fast to the Prophet is to attach oneself to his Sunna and become impregnated with the Qur'ān, which ʿĀ'isha described as 'the very nature of the Messenger of God' (*kāna khuluquhu al-qur'ān*).[38] The young Muḥyī l-Dīn understood the message. At the same time as waging the 'great holy war' under the direction of Jesus, he undertook to deepen his knowledge of the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth*. At Seville in 578/1182, when he was eighteen, he followed the courses of the famous reader (*muqri'*) of the time, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Khalaf al-Lakhmī (*d.* 585/1189).[39] From him he learned the seven readings of the Qur'ān and the *Kitāb al-kāfī* of Muḥammad b. Shurayḥ[40] (*d.* 476/1083), which al-Lakhmī had received from the author's son, Abū l-Ḥasan Shurayḥ al-Ruʿaynī[41] (*d.* 537/1142). The same work was

38. Cf. Muslim, *musāfirūn*, p.139; Abū Dāwūd, *taṭawwuʿ*, p.26; Ibn Ḥanbal, VI, pp.54, 91, 163, 216.

39. *Fut.*, I, pp.331, 425, 649; IV, p.550; *Ijāza*, p.173. Regarding this *muqri'* see Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāya*, Cairo 1933, II, pp.137–38; also Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmila*, ed. I. ʿAbbās, Beirut, VI, pp.188ff; Ibn al-Abbār, *Tak.*, ed. Codera, § 821.

40. For M. b. Shurayḥ, cf. *Nafḥ*, II, p.141; *GAL*, S.1, p.722.

41. As well as being his son, this man was also a famous *muḥaddith* and *muqri'* at Seville; he is

also transmitted to him by another *muqri'*, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ghālib Ibn al-Sharrāṭ[42] (*d.* 586/1190), who instructed him as well in recitation of the Qur'ān. At the same time he studied the *ḥadīth* and the *Sīra* with the *muḥaddith* ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suhaylī[43] (*d.* 581/1185), who taught him all his works and in particular his *Rawḍ al-anīf*, a commentary on the *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām. And he also attended sessions with the *qāḍī* Ibn Zarkūn[44] (*d.* 586/1190), who transmitted to him the *Kitāb al-taqaṣṣī* of Yūsuf al-Shāṭibī[45] and issued him with an *ijāza ʿāmma*, or authorisation *in absentia*.[46]

It was doubtless also during the same period that he frequented ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Azdī al-Ishbīlī,[47] author of a large number of works on *ḥadīth* of which the best known are the *Aḥkām al-kubrā*, *al-wusṭā* and *al-ṣughrā*. In addition to his own works, he also transmitted to Ibn ʿArabī the writings of the famous Ẓāhirite, Ibn Ḥazm (*d.* 456/1064). It is worth noting in passing that ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Ishbīlī was on very close terms with Abū Madyan[48] (*d.* 594/1197), who was to be Ibn ʿArabī's master *par excellence* even though they were never to meet in this world.

These masters, frequented by Ibn ʿArabī in his youth between 578 and 580H, were affiliated to Mālikism, which was the major legal school in Andalusia. Ibn ʿArabī himself, however, would ally himself neither with this nor with any other *madhhab*, or legal school;[49] he was in a sense his own

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mentioned in the majority of chains of transmission at the time. Cf. Ḍabbī, *Bughyat al-multamis*, ed. Codera, 1885, § 849.

42. For Ibn al-Sharrāṭ cf. *Ijāza*, p.173; *Tak.*, ed. Codera, § 1620; *Ghāyat al-nihāya*, I, p.379.

43. *Ḥāfiẓ muḥaddith* and highly-reputed linguist, al-Suhaylī was the author of numerous works. He died at Marrakech, where he had settled in approximately 579H, which means that his teaching of Ibn ʿArabī must have occurred at an earlier date. Cf. *Ijāza*, p.181; *Muḥāḍarat*, I, pp.6, 72, 236; also Ibn Farḥūn, *Dībāj*, Beirut, n.d., p.150; *Muʿjam al-muʾallifīn*, V, p.147.

44. *Ijāza*, p.174. Ibn Zarqūn was for a while *qāḍī* of Silves and Ceuta, before settling in Seville where he transmitted *ḥadīth*. Cf. *Tak.*, § 821; *Dībāj*, p.285; *Dhayl wa l-takmila*, VI, p.203.

45. A great *muḥaddith* of the 5th/eleventh century; he died in 463/1071. Cf. *Dībāj*, pp.357–58.

46. Ibn ʿArabī always makes a point of distinguishing in his *Ijāza* between the oral teaching that he actually received and a mere *ijāza ʿāmma*, which was an authorisation usually issued by correspondence. The *ijāza* '*in absentia*' was in fact very widespread at this time: cf. D. Urvoy, *Le Monde des Ulémas andalous*, Geneva 1978, p.166.

47. *Fut.*, I, p.649; II, p.302; *Ijāza*, p.174. ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Azdī, known as Ibn al-Kharrāṭ, was *khaṭīb* of Bougie at the time of the Almoravid revolt by the Banū Ghāniyya in 581H. Cf. *Dībāj*, pp.175–76; Marrākushī, *Muʿjib*, p.197; Ibn Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-ṣila*, ed. Lévi-Provençal, Rabat 1938, § 9, pp.5ff.

48. For his relationship to Abū Madyan cf. Ibn ʿArabī, *Risālat*, in *Alif*, p.26; also Ghubrīnī, *ʿUnwān al-dirāya*, Algiers 1970, § 5, p.73.

49. For Ibn ʿArabī's '*madhhab*' cf. Michel Chodkiewicz, 'Ibn ʿArabī: la lettre et la loi', in *Actes du colloque: Mystique, culture et société*, ed. M. Meslin, Paris 1983, pp.27–40. The attempt has often

madhhab. In fact, in contradiction of the thesis upheld by the majority of jurists, he considered that the door of *ijtihād*, of personal effort at legal interpretation, is not closed but will remain open until the end of time. Accordingly every *ijtihād* is valid—provided of course that it does not contradict what is expressly prescribed by the Muslim law or *sharīᶜa*.[50] In the *Futūḥāt* he confides: 'I have the intention, if God gives me a long life, to compose a major work which will deal with all legal questions as they appear in their external aspects, first of all expounding and elaborating on each question from the external point of view and then examining its status in relation to the internal side of man (*ḥukmuhā fī bāṭin al-insān*)'.[51]

Ibn ᶜArabī would never really carry out this project. However, he did devote several hundred pages of the *Futūḥāt* to discussing the pillars of Islam and the legal problems to which they give rise. Within the framework of this present study it is obviously impossible to analyse and explain Ibn ᶜArabī's method and position relative to each one of these points. It should be sufficient to say as a generalisation that his position in matters of *sharīᶜa* was to consider and at the same time validate every conceivable interpretation which Islamic law provides, and it is characterised by the systematic intention to lighten as much as possible the burden of *taklīf* or legal obligation which weighs upon every Muslim. One typical passage in the *Futūḥāt* sums up his position well, and shows how severe he was in his judgement of the doctors of the Law: 'God has made the divergence in legal questions a mercy for His servants and a broadening (*ittisāᶜ*) of what He has prescribed they should do to testify to their adoration. But in the case of those who follow the jurists of our time, these jurists have prohibited and restricted what the sacred Law had broadened in their favour. They say to the person who belongs to their school, if for example he is a Ḥanafite: "Don't go looking for a *rukhṣa* (an alleviation or exemption) from Shāfiᶜī regarding this problem you are faced with"; and so on with all of them. This is one of the greatest calamities and heaviest constraints in the matter of religion. God Himself has said: "In religion he has not imposed anything difficult on you" (Qur'ān

been made, following several Muslim authors and Goldziher, to make a Ẓāhirite of Ibn ᶜArabī. Certainly he did not hide his admiration for Ibn Ḥazm (cf. the vision in which he saw the Prophet embracing Ibn Ḥazm: *Fut.*, II, p.519 and the *Kitāb al-mubashshirāt*, ms. Fatih 5322, f° 90b; also *Fut.*, II, p.302, *Dīwān*, pp.205–6). However, Ibn ᶜArabī clearly states that he was not affiliated to any *madhhab* (cf. *Dīwān*, p.47). A number of texts in which he defines his position with regard to *uṣūl al-fiqh* or sources of law are cited by Cyrille Chodkiewicz in chapter 4 of the anthology *Les Illuminations de La Mecque/The Meccan Illuminations*, ed. Michel Chodkiewicz, Paris 1988.

50. Cf. *Fut.*, I, p.494; II, pp.165, 685; III, pp.70, 336.

51. *Fut.*, I, p.334.

22:78). The Law has affirmed the validity of the status of anyone who makes a personal effort at interpretation for himself and for those who follow him. But in our days the jurists have condemned this effort, claiming it encourages people to make a mockery of religion. For them to say this is the height of ignorance.'[52]

However, it is important to point out that the extreme leniency in matters of jurisprudence which Ibn ᶜArabī recommended in his works is intrinsically linked to the function of mercy with which (as we will see later) he considered himself to be invested; in other words, it must be understood within the context of his teaching as a whole. It is not to be interpreted as a form of latitudinarianism; in fact, on the contrary, it goes hand in hand with an exceptional personal rigour in observance of the *sharīᶜa*. For himself and for his disciples Ibn ᶜArabī was far from choosing what was easiest. As he explains: 'I trust I am one of those who fulfil their commitment to God and do not betray the pact (*mīthāq*) . . .. It is towards this that I guide men and it is upon this principle that I train my disciples. I do not allow anyone who has undertaken a commitment (*ᶜahd*) towards God and to whom I transmit my teaching to betray this commitment, regardless of how large or small its benefit will be. I do not permit him to do this—not even in the name of a legal mitigation (*rukhṣa*) which would authorise him to do so without committing a sin.'[53]

In a chapter of the *Futūḥāt* where Ibn ᶜArabī discusses the divine Names and their power and effects on the different categories of spiritual men who are governed by them, he states: 'I myself obtained these stations (*maqāmāt*) when I had just started on the Way, in only a short period in 580'.[54] He will therefore have been twenty years old at the time. Some four or five years had passed since his meeting with the philosopher Averroes at Cordoba. The asceticism and extreme austerity which he had imposed on himself during that period had produced a prodigious metamorphosis in him which sometimes had particularly astonishing aspects. For example, he declares that thanks to the spiritual influx (*rūḥāniyya*) of Jesus he obtained at the start of his wayfaring the station of the famous Qadīb al-Bān, who through his 'imaginal strength' (*quwwat al-khayāl*) had the power to assume any form he desired.[55] Elsewhere he states specifically that in his own case he only assumed either human or angelic forms, never the form of animals.[56] Further, according to his disciple Qūnawī Ibn ᶜArabī 'had the power of meeting with the spirit of any of the prophets or saints of the past whom he

52. *Fut.*, I, p.392. 53. *Fut.*, I, p.723. 54. *Fut.*, II, p.425.

55. *Fut.*, III, p.43. In his *Creative Imagination* Henry Corbin strangely failed to make use of the invaluable data contained in this chapter on the *ᶜālam al-khayāl*, or imaginal world.

56. *Fut.*, I, p.603.

chose. This he was able to do in three ways. Sometimes he made their spirit descend into this world, where he perceived them in a subtle corporeal form similar to the one they possessed while alive; sometimes he induced them to present themselves to him in his sleep; and at other times he cast off his own corporeal form so as to meet them'.[57] But even that is not all. Chapter 178 of the *Futūḥāt*—a long chapter devoted to the subject of the station of Love (*maqām al-maḥabba*)—reveals that, during an episode which we will examine later, Ibn ᶜArabī's imaginal power had attained to such a height that he saw God at every instant, just as the Prophet used to see Gabriel.

But these supernatural powers were far from being the only indications as to his spiritual progress; at the most they were just external signs, and eventually dangerous temptations which sometimes punctuate the course of sainthood. The fundamental change that occurred in Ibn ᶜArabī had to do with his perception of beings and things. Every single thing is sublime when viewed in its relation to God. In fact from the point of view of the divine essence there are no superior beings and inferior beings, things that are noble and others that are not. 'There is not one single substance (*jawhar fard*) in the entire universe—at however high or low a level—which is not linked to a divine reality (*ḥaqīqa ilāhiyya*), and from the point of view of the Almighty there is no pre-excellence (*tafāḍul*).'[58]

This is not just some metaphysical assertion; on the contrary, it is the statement of an intimate and self-evident fact which transforms the very being along with its perception of the world. This is shown by the following story. 'One day it happened that, openly and in public, I was carrying something disgusting in my hands, which was hardly in keeping with my social rank (*mā kāna yaqtaḍīhi manṣabī fī l-dunyā*). A foul stench of salt fish was emanating from it. My companions imagined I was carrying it with the intention of mortifying my soul (*mujāhadatan li nafsī*), because in their eyes I was much too lofty to stoop to carrying such a thing. They said to my shaikh: "So-and-so has gone beyond the bounds of propriety in his efforts at self-mortification!" The shaikh replied: "Well, let's ask him what his reason was for carrying the thing". So it came about that the shaikh questioned me in front of them and told me what they had said. I replied to them: "You are mistaken about me in your interpretation of my action; by God, that was not my intention in doing what I did! It was simply that I saw that God, in spite of His Greatness, did not disdain to create such a thing. How then am I to disdain to carry it?" The shaikh thanked me, and my companions were left stupefied.'[59] Ibn ᶜArabī refers again to this episode in another passage of the

57. Ibn al-ᶜImād, *Shadharāt*, V, p.196. 58. *Fut.*, I, p.506. 59. Ibid.

Futūḥāt, where he provides some additional information.[60] Firstly, he remarks that this was *the first experience of this kind which happened to him on the Path* (*awwal mashhad dhuqnāhu min hādhā l-bāb fī hādhā l-ṭarīq*) and that it happened right in the middle of the souk—in other words in the busiest place in town. Secondly, he states that the shaikh upbraided him with the words 'the people of your rank among those who are great in this world (*ahl manṣabika min arbāb al-dunyā*)'. This expression, together with the statement at the start of the first account ('which was hardly in keeping with my social rank'), provides ample proof—if proof were needed—of the prestige and high social standing of Ibn ᶜArabī and his family in the society of Seville.

However, the most important point to emerge from this incident is the fact that it occurred when he had only just started on the Path—in other words in approximately 580/1184—and that at the time he was frequenting a spiritual master. To whom does the expression *shaykhī*, 'my master', refer? There would seem to be only one person to whom it could possibly refer at that particular time: Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-ᶜUryabī, the first *murshid* whom Ibn ᶜArabī frequented on the Path. Because, as we will see, he had a very large number of teachers, the Shaikh al-Akbar was almost always careful to specify the name of any master he happened to mention—except on a few occasions such as in the present instance, where he restricts himself to 'my master' or some similar expression. But by cross-reference between these few passages and other texts it can be established without any doubt that the master in question was the shaikh al-ᶜUryabī. This is how Ibn ᶜArabī describes his first encounter with the man whom, in the incident described above, he refers to as 'my master': 'The first time I appeared in front of my master (*shaykhī*) I said to him, "Give me a counsel (*awṣinī*) before you look at me! I will keep your counsel and you will only look upon me again when you will see me invested in it". He said to me: "That is a noble and sublime aspiration (*himma*). My child, close your door, break all ties and keep company with the All-Bounteous; He will speak to you without a veil." I put this counsel into practice until I had seen its benediction for me. I then went back to him and he saw I was invested with it. He said: "Like this it is good; otherwise, not".'[61]

We can now compare this account with the one given by Ibn ᶜArabī in the *Rūḥ* of his first meeting with the shaikh Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-ᶜUryabī. 'The first person I met on the Way was Abū Jaᶜfar Aḥmad al-ᶜUryabī. He had arrived in Seville at a time when I had only just started to become acquainted with this noble Path. I was the first of those who hastened to him. I found a man totally devoted to invocation (*dhikr*). I presented myself to him and he knew immediately the spiritual need which had brought me to him. He asked me:

60. *Fut.*, I, p.588. 61. *Fut.*, IV, p.529.

"Are you firmly resolved to follow the Way of God?" I replied: "The servant is resolved but it is God who determines the matter!" He then said to me: "Close your door, break all ties and keep company with the All-Bounteous; He will speak to you without a veil". I put this into practice until I received illumination'.[62]

Quite obviously, then, it is the shaikh 'Uryabī who is referred to in the first of the passages quoted above; comparison of other passages corroborates this conclusion. All the other places in the *Futūḥāt* where Ibn ᶜArabī refers to this master without naming him are concerned with the practice of invocation (*dhikr*) using the divine Name *Allāh*: 'This divine Name (*Allāh*) was the one I used in practising invocation and it was also the one used by the teacher through whom I entered the Way';[63] 'One day I went to see one of those men who are present with God, one of my masters who practised the invocation "*Allāh, Allāh*" without adding anything else, and I asked him "Why do you not say '*lā ilāha illā llāh*' ['there is no god but God'] instead?", because I hoped as a result of my question to benefit from a spiritual teaching. He replied to me: "My child, the breath of everyone who breathes is in the hands of God, not in his own hands, and every letter (*ḥarf*) is a breath. I am therefore afraid in case by saying '*lā*' ['no'] as part of the formula '*lā ilāha illā llāh*', that '*lā*' might be my last breath and as a result I will die in the terrible solitude of negation (*fī waḥshati l-nafy*)"'.[64]

Let us now compare these two texts with two others in which Ibn ᶜArabī alludes to the *dhikr* practised by his master Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-ᶜUryabī. 'Some men of God practise *dhikr* with the name "*Allāh, Allāh*". This was the form of *dhikr* used by my master Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-ᶜUryabī'.[65] 'One day I went to my master Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-ᶜUryabī, a native of Ulya, who devoted himself entirely to invocation of the Name "*Allāh*" without adding anything else. I asked him: "My master, why do you not say '*lā ilāha illā llāh*'?" He replied to me: "My child, breaths are in the hands of God, not in mine. I am therefore afraid in case He calls me back to Him at the moment when I am saying '*lā*', and of dying as a result in the terrible solitude of negation!"'.[66]

The juxtaposition of these various passages requires no commentary. When Ibn ᶜArabī simply speaks of '*shaykhī*' without being more specific, it is unquestionably Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-ᶜUryabī to whom he is referring.

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62. *Rūḥ*, § 1, p.76; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.63. In this text it will be noted that Ibn ᶜArabī attributes to the shaikh ᶜUryabī the *kunya* 'Abū Jaᶜfar' instead of 'Abū l-ᶜAbbās'. This may be due to a *lapsus calami* on his part, or because the Andalusian shaikh was known by both of these *kunyas*.

63. *Fut.*, III, p.300.

64. *Fut.*, IV, p.497.

65. *Fut.*, IV, p.89.

66. *Fut.*, I, p.329.

If Ibn ᶜArabī's first 'supernatural' teacher was Jesus, it was through 'this illiterate peasant who was unable to write or even count'[67] that, at about the age of twenty, he began his *sulūk*. It is in fact interesting to note that there happens to have been a close connection between ᶜUryabī, the terrestrial teacher, and Jesus, the supernatural one. As he himself writes: 'My master Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-ᶜUryabī was Christic (ᶜ*īsāwī*) at the end of his life, whereas I was at the beginning'.[68] In another passage from the *Futūḥāt* which we will later need to examine in greater detail, Ibn ᶜArabī states again: 'My master Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-ᶜUryabī was "on the foot" of Jesus (ᶜ*alā qadam* ᶜ*Īsā*)'.[69]

There is no need here to analyse the notion of prophetic inheritance (*wirātha*), which occupies an important place in Ibn ᶜArabī's hagiology. This has in fact already been done and, besides, belongs to an analysis of doctrine which cannot possibly be undertaken here.[70] The essential point to bear in mind is that for Ibn ᶜArabī the saints are fundamentally heirs of the prophets (*warathat al-anbiyā'*); the predominance of the inheritance from this or that prophet is what determines the spiritual type of any given saint. It also sometimes happens that a saint inherits successively from a number of prophets, and this is precisely what happened in the case of the Shaikh al-Akbar, who explains that after having been 'Christic' he became 'Mosaic', 'Hūdic' and so on until he inherited from the prophet Muḥammad himself.[71] However, from whichever of the hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets a saint inherits, indirectly it is the inheritance of the prophet Muḥammad—'tabernacle' (*mishkāt*) of all the successive prophets—which he really receives. The fact that Ibn ᶜArabī defines himself as having been a 'Christic' type in his youth is hardly surprising in view of the major role which Jesus clearly played at the start of his spiritual vocation. And yet, as we will soon discover, this relationship with the Son of Mary also had another aspect. For the moment it is enough to remember that, through the intermediary of his first teacher who was also 'Christic', Ibn ᶜArabī was under the influence of Jesus.

67. *Rūḥ*, p.76; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.63.

68. *Fut.*, I, p.223. Also, in *Fut.*, I, p.365 Ibn ᶜArabī mentions the following snippet: 'It was said *to our master*, "You are Jesus the son of Mary".' In his translation of this chapter of the *Futūḥāt* Michel Vâlsan correctly identifies the master in question as ᶜUryabī. Cf. *Études Traditionnelles*, July/October 1962, p.169 and n.12.

69. *Fut.*, III, p.208.

70. The first systematic analysis of Ibn ᶜArabī's doctrine of sainthood is the one made by Michel Chodkiewicz in his work *Seal of the Saints*. Regarding the particular point in question here see especially chapter 5.

71. *Fut.*, I, p.223 (ᶜ*īsāwī, mūsāwī, hūdī*).

WESTERN SUFISM IN IBN ᶜARABĪ'S TIME

In Ibn ᶜArabī's time two major movements dominated Sufism in the Islamic West. The first was known as the 'school of Almeria', and its chief representatives were Abū l-ᶜAbbās Ibn al-ᶜArīf[72] and Abū l-Ḥakam Ibn Barrajān.[73] Three letters which were written by Ibn al-ᶜArīf to Ibn Barrajān, and published in 1956 by Father Nwyia,[74] leave no possible room for doubt as to the nature of the relationship between these two Andalusian Sufis: Ibn al-ᶜArīf considered himself a humble disciple of Ibn Barrajān.

Ibn al-ᶜArīf settled in Almeria, which at the start of the sixth/twelfth century had become one of the main centres of Andalusian Sufism, and there he gathered around himself a considerable number of disciples; meanwhile, his master Ibn Barrajān had been proclaimed 'imām' in a hundred and thirty villages in the region of Seville.[75] Their popularity, as well as the doctrines that they taught, rendered them suspect in the eyes of the Almoravid authorities. In 536H Sultan ᶜAlī b. Yūsuf b. Tāshifīn commanded them to appear at Marrakech, and he also summoned another Sufi, Abū Bakr al-Mayūrqī; according to Ibn al-Abbār all three men taught the same doctrine.[76] However, they did not all receive the same treatment. According to Marrākushī,[77] Mayūrqī was arrested, whipped, and then released; after this misadventure he went to stay for a while in the Mashriq before returning to the Maghreb, where he taught *ḥadīth* in Bougie. As for Ibn Barrajān, the *Takmila* simply states that he met with his death at Marrakech[78]—but without being any more specific about the circumstances in which he died. However, in the *Tashawwuf* Tādilī relates the following story: 'When Abū

72. For Ibn al-ᶜArīf cf. the introduction to *Maḥāsin al-majālis*, ed. and trans. Asín Palacios, Paris 1933; Asín Palacios, *Obras escogidas*, Madrid 1946, I, pp.220–42; *EI²* s.v. *Tashawwuf*, § 18, pp.118–23. The article by Bruno Halff, 'Le Maḥāsin al-magālis d'Ibn al-ᶜArīf et l'œuvre du soufi hanbalite al-Anṣārī', contains useful information about Ibn al-ᶜArīf's sources. See also Ibn al-Abbār, *Muᶜjam*, Cairo 1967, § 14, pp.15–20, Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Ṣila*, ed. Codera, 1883, § 175, *Tashawwuf* § 18; ᶜAbbās b. Ibr., *al-ᶜAlām*, Rabat 1974, I, pp.5–24, and ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb b. Manṣūr, *Aᶜlām al-Maghrib*, Rabat 1983, III, pp.231ff.

73. For Ibn Barrajān cf. *Takmila*, ed. Codera, § 1797, and Zaraklī, *Aᶜlām*, VI, p.6.

74. P. Nwyia, 'Notes sur quelques fragments inédits de la correspondance d'Ibn al-ᶜArīf avec Ibn Barrajān', in *Hesperis*, 1956, vol. 43, pp.217–21.

75. Shaᶜrānī, *Tabaqāt*, I, p.15. Shaᶜrānī is himself a very late source, but D. Gril has drawn attention to a similar remark in the *Waḥīd* by Shaikh ᶜAbd al-Ghaffār al-Qūsī, an Egyptian Sufi of the 7th/thirteenth century. Cf. D. Gril, 'Une source inédite pour l'histoire du *taṣawwuf*', in *Livre du centenaire de l'IFAO*, Cairo 1980, p.463.

76. *Muᶜjam*, p.19.

77. Ibn ᶜAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī, *al-Dhayl wa l-takmila*, Beirut 1973, VI, § 452, pp.169–71. For Mayūrqī see also Ibn al-Abbār, *Muᶜjam*, § 123, and *Takmila*, ed. Codera, § 608.

78. *Takmila*, § 1797.

l-Ḥakam Ibn Barrajān was taken from Cordoba to Marrakech he was interrogated regarding some things he had said which had been held against him, and he debated the issues after the fashion of *ta'wīl*. He extricated himself from what had given rise to the criticisms and then declared: "I will not live [long], but he who summoned me here will not survive my death". He died, and the sultan gave instructions to have his body thrown on the city's rubbish dump.' However, as Tādilī goes on to explain, Ibn Ḥirzihim (one of Shaikh Abū Madyan's teachers) was informed by a disciple of his about the sultan's decision and issued a call to the population of Marrakech to attend a funeral ceremony for Ibn Barrajān.[79]

And finally, there is Ibn al-ᶜArīf. While Ibn Bashkuwāl is as evasive as could be about the causes of his death, he is very precise regarding the date when he died: 'He died on Thursday night, and was buried during the day of Friday the 23rd of Safar, 536'.[80] Ibn al-Abbār gives two versions of what happened.[81] According to the first, the sultan was convinced of Ibn al-ᶜArīf's excellence and piety and ordered him to be released and escorted to Ceuta, where the shaikh died as the result of an illness. According to the second—to which Ibn al-Abbār says he is unwilling to give much credence—Ibn al-ᶜArīf was poisoned on his return journey, while making the sea crossing.

A year after the death of Ibn al-ᶜArīf another Sufi, Ibn Qasī, claimed he was the Mahdī and organised an anti-Almoravid rebellion in the Algarve.[82] With the help of his disciples he managed to seize a number of strongholds in the region. When the Almohads landed on the peninsula, Ibn Qasī initially rallied to their cause in 540/1145 but eventually dissociated himself from them and died, also assassinated, at Silves in 546/1151.

Of these three representatives of Almoravid Sufism it was unquestionably Ibn al-ᶜArīf who exerted the greatest influence on the evolution of Ibn ᶜArabī's teaching. The numerous references in the *Futūḥāt* to the *Maḥāsin al-majālis*—a work in which Ibn al-ᶜArīf describes the different stages of the Way—and the various allusions to the man himself[83] testify both to Ibn ᶜArabī's interest in his work and to his profound respect for its author, whom he praises for his perfect knowledge and describes as 'one of the men of spiritual realisation' (*min al-muḥaqqiqīn*).[84] It is important to emphasise in this connection that, of the three men mentioned above, Ibn al-ᶜArīf appears to have been the only one whom Ibn ᶜArabī specifically refers to as *shaykhunā*, 'our master'.

79. *Tashawwuf*, p.170. 80. *Ṣila*, ed. Codera, § 175. 81. *Muᶜjam*, § 14, p.19.

82. For Ibn Qasī cf. *EI²* s.v.; Asín Palacios, *Obras escogidas*, I, pp.144–45, 150; Marrākushī, *Muᶜjib*, pp.150–51; and V.Lagardère, 'La Tariqa et la révolte des murīdūn en 539/1144 en Andalus', *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 35.1, 1983, pp.157–70.

83. Cf. e.g. *Fut.*, I, pp.93, 279; II, pp.97, 290, 318, 325; III, p.396; IV, pp.92–3.

84. *Fut.*, II, p.318.

Several of Ibn ᶜArabī's Andalusian teachers were associated directly or indirectly with the Almerian school. This was the case for example with Abū ᶜAbd Allāh M. b. A. al-Anṣārī al-Ghazzāl, who according to Ibn ᶜArabī was a disciple of Ibn al-ᶜArīf.[85] Yūsuf b. Yaḥyā al-Tādilī, who as noted earlier died in 627/1230, also cites a contemporary of his to the effect that Shaikh al-Ghazzāl was one of Ibn al-ᶜArīf's greatest disciples (*min akbar talāmidha Ibn al-ᶜArīf*).[86] But as the editor of the *Tashawwuf*, Aḥmad Tawfīq, correctly points out,[87] this would seem to be chronologically impossible: Abū ᶜAbd Allāh al-Ghazzāl, known as Ibn al-Yatīm al-Andarshī, is said by his biographers to have been born in 544/1149—that is, eight years after the death of Ibn al-ᶜArīf. Yet according to these same compilers Ghazzāl's father, Abū l-ᶜAbbās (*d.* 581/1185), was a disciple of Ibn al-ᶜArīf,[88] which clearly suggests that different people have been confused. Ibn ᶜArabī himself cannot have been entirely responsible for inventing the stories he tells about al-Ghazzāl's presence in Almeria together with his master Ibn al-ᶜArīf. He knew him far too well (a poem in the *Dīwān* and one of his *Risālāt* show that he exchanged correspondence with him)[89] to confuse him with his father.

Similarly, both ᶜAbd al-Jalīl b. Mūsā (*d.* 608/1211)—author of the *Masā'il shuᶜab al-īmān*,[90] and frequently visited by Ibn ᶜArabī at Qaṣr Kutāma (Alcazarquivir)[91]—and Shaikh Abū Ṣabr Ayyūb al-Fihrī (*d.* 609/1212), with whom he studied *ḥadīth* in Ceuta, were disciples of Ibn Ghālib al-Qurashī (*d.* 568/1172),[92] who was himself a disciple of Ibn al-ᶜArīf. There were also Ibrāhīm b. Ṭarīf and his friend ᶜAbd Allāh al-Qalfāṭ, whose company Ibn ᶜArabī frequented between 589 and 594. These two men (we will have more to say later about them as well as about al-Fihrī) were disciples of Abū l-Rabīᶜ al-Mālaqī, himself a disciple of Ibn al-ᶜArīf.[93]

Finally it should be mentioned that Shaikh ᶜUryabī, in spite of the fact that he was totally illiterate, was familiar with Ibn al-ᶜArīf's doctrinal arguments and used to debate them with his disciple Ibn ᶜArabī. This emerges from the following passage in the *Rūḥ al-quds*. 'The last time I visited him—God have

85. Cf. e.g. *Fut.*, I, p.228; II, p.201; IV, p.550; *Rūḥ*, § 14, p.99; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.104.
86. *Tashawwuf*, p.119.
87. Ibid., n.111.
88. Ibn ᶜAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī, *al-Dhayl wa l-takmila*, VI, pp.44–9 and *Tak.*, ed. Codera, § 966 (son); *Dhayl*, I, p.439, *Tak.*, ed. Bencheneb, § 221, ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb b. Mansūr, *Aᶜlām al maghrib*, Rabat 1986, III, p.350 (father).
89. *Dīwān*, p.46; O. Yahia, R.G. § 611, *Risāla ila . . . al-Ghazzāl*.
90. For Shaikh ᶜAbd al-Jalīl cf. *Tashawwuf* §§ 241, 416; *Tak.*, ed. Codera, § 1818.
91. *Durra*, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.160; *Ijāza*, p.181.
92. For Ibn Ghālib cf. *Tashawwuf*, § 81, p.228.
93. For Abū l-Rabīᶜ al-Mālaqī cf. *Fut.*, III, p.508, IV, p.474, and the bibliographical note by D. Gril in Ṣafī al-Dīn, *Risāla*, p.222.

mercy on him—in the company of others . . . he announced: "Let us examine a problem which I have already put to you, Abū Bakr [here he pointed to me with his finger], for I have always been astonished by the saying of Abū l-ᶜAbbās Ibn al-ᶜArīf which runs, 'Until what has never been has been extinguished and what has never ceased to be remains'. We all know that what never was is extinguished and what has never ceased to be endures, so what does he mean by these words?" As none of my companions was able to provide an answer, he turned to me. Even though, in contrast to them, I knew the answer, I refrained from speaking because I had adopted the habit of forcing myself to keep silence. The shaikh understood, and did not insist.'[94]

In 590/1194 at Tunis, Ibn ᶜArabī studied Ibn Barrajān's *Kitāb al-ḥikma* under the direction of his teacher ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz al-Mahdawī.[95] Possibly he had already obtained some knowledge of the work through another teacher of his, ᶜAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Ishbīlī (*d.* 581/1185), who according to the *Dībāj* was a disciple of Ibn Barrajān.[96] In any case, Ibn ᶜArabī's opinion of this other representative of the Almeria school appears to have been more reserved. He undoubtedly possessed knowledge of some of the spiritual sciences—especially the science of astrology (*ᶜilm al-falak*), which enabled him to predict Saladin's victory at Jerusalem—but Ibn ᶜArabī emphasises that he had not mastered this knowledge completely.[97] He does however acknowledge the value of Ibn Barrajān's exposition of the 'divine Reality out of which everything is created' (*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi*),[98] which is an idea that occupies an important place in his own teaching.[99]

As for Ibn Qasī, contrary to the general opinion shared by Western specialists the Shaikh al-Akbar did not think highly of him. To be fair, it must be admitted that the frequent references in his writings to this teacher and to his work, the *Kitāb khalᶜ al-naᶜlayn*,[100] not to mention the eulogistic expressions which he sometimes uses in referring to him,[101] would seem *a priori* to support such an interpretation; indeed, this interpretation appears never to have been questioned. However, even the most cursory reading of Ibn ᶜArabī's commentary on Ibn Qasī's *Khalᶜ al-naᶜlayn* (a work often referred to in the literature but apparently rarely consulted) shows just how mistaken

94. *Rūḥ*, p.78; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.66.
95. *Risāla*, ed. H. Taher, p.31.
96. Ibn Farḥūn, *Dībāj*, pp.175–76.
97. *Fut.*, I, p.60; IV, p.220.
98. *Fut.*, II, p.104; III, p.77. For Ibn Barrajān cf. also *Fut.*, II, pp.577, 649; *Mawāqiᶜ al-nujūm*, Cairo 1965, p.142; *Tadbīrāt ilāhiyya*, ed. Nyberg, 1919, p.125.
99. Regarding the notion of *al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi* cf. Suᶜād al-Ḥakīm, *Muᶜjam*, §§ 183 and 438.
100. Cf. e.g. *Fut.*, I, pp.136, 312, 749; II, pp.52, 257, 686, 693; III, pp.7, 165, etc.
101. As for example in *Fut.*, I, p.136, where he declares him *min sādāt al-qawm*.

this view actually is.[102] It was, again, in Tunis in 590/1194, when he met the son of Ibn Qasī,[103] that Ibn ʿArabī first became acquainted with the *Khalʿ al-naʿlayn*. But there can be little doubt that at that time he just leafed through the work or read a few passages from it,[104] because it was only much later—when he settled down to writing the commentary—that he discovered its real contents. There are various indications in the *Sharḥ kitāb khalʿ al-naʿlayn* that Ibn ʿArabī composed it during his Damascus period[105]—in other words between 620 and 638 and most probably during the very last years of his life. This helps to explain why it differs so much in tone from the passages in his earlier works where he refers to Ibn Qasī. In reading the commentary one perceives that the further Ibn ʿArabī proceeded with his reading and analysis of the *Khalʿ al-naʿlayn*, the more noticeably he modified his opinion of the author. Satisfied to begin with, then astounded, he ended up horrified and disappointed. At the start of the text, when commenting on the *khuṭba* (doxology) of the *Khalʿ al-naʿlayn*, he is almost enthusiastic: 'I am virtually certain that this man [Ibn Qasī] was a man of spiritual experience' (*yaghlabu ʿalā ẓanninā annahu min ahl al-dhawq*).[106] A little further on Ibn ʿArabī is already much more critical, and asserts that 'this man in his book has not adhered to what the faith demands' (*hādhā l-rajul mā waqafa fī kitābihi ʿalā mā yaqtaḍīhi al-īmān*).[107] Finally, in the following pages he calls him an imitator (*muqallid*), an ignoramus (*jāhil*) and even an impostor:[108] 'He is nothing but a transmitter (*nāqil*) and an imitator, devoid of spiritual experience and revelation . . .. Through what he says here he has put an end once and for all to my mistaken judgement about him'. Ibn ʿArabī then goes on to explain that Ibn Qasī simply transcribed more or less faithfully what he was told by a great master of the Way called Khalaf Allāh al-Andalusī. 'This person came to see him [Ibn Qasī] and described to him what had entered his heart from the Holy Spirit and the divine light . . .. I am able to distinguish between what originates from him [Ibn Qasī] and what he has transmitted [from Khalaf Allāh]. Besides, I know certain things about his states from other people. I happen to have met his son, who is an intelligent and discerning

102. I am very grateful to Suʿād al-Ḥakīm for providing me with a photocopy of the manuscript of Ibn ʿArabī's *Sharḥ kitāb khalʿ al-naʿlayn* (Shehit Ali 1174, f^{os} 89–175).

103. *Fut.*, IV, p.129; *Sharḥ . . . al-naʿlayn*, f° 147b.

104. Ibn ʿArabī states (f° 147b) that Ibn Qasī's son offered to take away the *Kitāb khalʿ al-naʿlayn*, but that for some particular reason he refused (*li-sabab kāna hunāk*).

105. See for example f° 173, where he uses the expression *taraḥḥum* in referring to Shaikh Ṣadr al-Dīn Ibn Ḥamawayh (*d.* 616/1219), or f° 142a where Ismāʿīl b. Sawdakīn, who transcribed the *Sharḥ*, is mentioned. Ibn ʿArabī also alludes on a number of occasions to the *Futūḥāt*, the first draft of which was completed in 629/1231.

106. F° 97a. 107. F° 99b. 108. F^{os} 111b-112a.

person, and I questioned him about his father's states. What he described to me confirms what I have just said about his imperfection . . .. [This also emerges from] the letter he wrote to ʿAbd al-Mu'min b. ʿAlī and what he says in it about himself, which was not true . . .. He was not a man of spiritual realisation but an ignoramus'.[109]

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Asín Palacios, and after him Henry Corbin, are quite categorical in stating that the 'school of Almeria' was simply an extension and continuation of the famous 'Masarra' school.[110] And yet Asín was quite aware that there is nothing—no document or any other source of information—to support this thesis, or rather hypothesis. He also attempted in the studies he devoted to Ibn Masarra al-Jabalī (*d.* 319/931) and his school[111] to demonstrate that this shaikh was not so much a mystic as a 'Bāṭinite philosopher' whose teaching was inspired in its essentials by pseudo-Empedocles. 'Beneath the appearance of Muʿtazilism and Bāṭinism, Ibn Masarra was the defender and propagator within Spanish Islam of the Plotinian system of pseudo-Empedocles and of its most characteristic thesis: the hierarchy of five substances presided over by a spiritual First Matter.'[112] Unfortunately, on this point as well Asín Palacios was unable to refer to any documents which might have enabled him to substantiate his thesis, for the simple reason that neither of the two works attributed to Ibn Masarra—the *Kitāb al-ḥurūf* and the *Kitāb al-tabṣira*—had been rediscovered at the time when he was writing. As Professor Stern was to emphasise many years later in a paper that criticises and takes issue with Asín Palacios' theory,[113] his argumentation is in fact based ultimately on nothing more than a remark by the historian Ibn Saʿīd al-Qurṭubī (*d.* 402/1070) to the effect that certain Bāṭinites such as Ibn Masarra professed the doctrine of Empedocles. As to Ibn Masarra's philosophical system, the only substantial evidence available to Asín Palacios to help him form some idea of

109. Ibn ʿArabī seems to be referring here to Ibn Qasī's claim that he was the Mahdī. It is interesting to note that, although he challenges this claim, nowhere does he appear to have expressed any similar criticism of Ibn Barrajān. Regarding the relations between Ibn Qasī and the sultan 'Abd al-Mu'min cf. Marrākushī, *Muʿjib*, p.150.

110. Cf. Henry Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, Paris 1968, p.311, where he states that Ibn al-ʿArīf 'created a *ṭarīqa* based on the theosophy of Ibn Masarra'; Asín Palacios, *Obras escogidas*, I, p.144.

111. *Obras escogidas*, I: '*Ibn Masarra y su escuela*', Madrid 1946.

112. Ibid., p.113.

113. S.M. Stern, 'Ibn Masarra, follower of pseudo-Empedocles, an illusion', in *Actas do IV Congresso de estudos arabes e islamicos*, Cambra-Lisbon 1968 and Leiden 1971, pp.325–39; reprinted in S.M. Stern, *Medieval Arabic and Hebrew Thought*, London 1983.

its nature consisted of two passages from the *Futūḥāt* in which Ibn ᶜArabī refers to him.[114] Stern himself consequently came to the conclusion that Shaikh al-Jabalī was not so much a Neoplatonic philosopher as a mystic who derived his teaching from Sufism. The debate is not yet closed, and we must wait for further studies to bring additional facts to light before the issue can be settled one way or the other. This will be made much easier by the fact that in 1972 Dr. Kamāl Ibrāhīm Jaᶜfar discovered the two treatises by Ibn Masarra—the *Kitāb khawāṣṣ al-ḥurūf* and the *Kitāb al-iᶜtibār*—which up until then had been known by the name of *Kitāb al-tabṣira*. From the lengthy account of these texts which he has provided[115] it emerges that, although there is undoubtedly a Neoplatonic tone to Ibn Masarra's doctrine (itself far too common a feature in Sufi literature and philosophy to enable one to draw any significant conclusions), it is hard to establish any filiation between this tendency in Ibn Masarra and the doctrine of pseudo-Empedocles—let alone to justify any reference to it in terms of 'Bāṭinite philosophy'. Ibn Masarra's Neoplatonism is in itself not at all surprising. The influence of Neoplatonic ideas had already become widespread, especially through the so-called 'Theology of Aristotle', and the reconstruction which Asín Palacios went on to produce would appear—to say the very least—highly conjectural.[116]

Whatever the final truth of the matter, one thing which is certain is that Ibn ᶜArabī knew—and appreciated—the work and teaching of Ibn Masarra, whom he describes as 'one of the greatest masters of the Way in terms of knowledge, spiritual state and revelation'.[117] He refers to him explicitly twice in the *Futūḥāt*, and once in the *Kitāb al-mīm*—where, with regard to the 'secrets of the science of letters', he states that he will tackle the subject 'in the manner of Ibn Masarra'.[118] Of these three texts (to which we should also add an allusion in the *Fuṣūṣ*),[119] the one that offers the clearest evidence for supposing Ibn ᶜArabī was influenced by Ibn Masarra is chapter 13 of the *Futūḥāt*, which deals with the symbolism of the Throne, the Intellect and the Universal Soul. And yet Abū l-ᶜAlā ᶜAfīfī has very correctly pointed out that the Neoplatonism of the Shaikh al-Akbar is in fact closer to that of the Ikhwān

114. *Fut.*, I, p.149; II, p.581. J.W. Morris has drawn up a list of the sources that refer to Ibn Masarra in a long unpublished article, 'Ibn Masarra: a reconstruction of the primary sources', which he has been kind enough to show me.

115. 'Min mu'allafāt Ibn Masarra al-mafqūda', *Majalla Kulliyyat al-tarbiya*, vol. III, 1972, pp.27–63.

116. For the influence of Neoplatonism on Islamic thought see e.g. I.R. Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: an introduction to the thought of the Brethren of Purity*, London 1982.

117. *Fut.*, I, p.147.

118. *Kitāb al-mīm wa l-wāw wa l-nūn*, in *Rasā'il*, p.7.

119. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, p.84.

al-Ṣafā', or 'Brethren of Purity', than to the Neoplatonism of Ibn Masarra.[120] In fact already long before Ibn ᶜArabī's time the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity—composed during the second half of the fourth/tenth century[121]—had penetrated both philosophical and Sufi circles in Andalusia, where they encountered considerable success. In spite of the fact that Ibn ᶜArabī does not seem ever to have referred explicitly to the Epistles, the similarities and coincidences between his teaching and the teaching of the Brethren of Purity on a number of points—for example regarding the vegetative soul[122]—reveal their direct influence on his thinking.

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In parallel to the 'school of Almeria'—which so tangibly left its mark on Andalusian Sufism, giving it a character and originality that are quite unique—we also see another trend emerging. This trend was specifically associated with the Maghreb, and its chief representatives were Abū Yaᶜzā (*d.* 572/1177), Ibn Ḥirzihim (*d.* 559/1163) and, slightly later, Abū Madyan.[123] In this case there was certainly no question of a 'school' as such; the names of these saints are not associated with any specific doctrine or even with any particular written text. Essentially it was due to their extraordinary personalities that they made such an impression on their contemporaries and even down to today are numbered among the most venerated saints of the Maghreb. This is particularly true of Abū Yaᶜzā:[124] a Berber who was unable to express himself correctly in Arabic, his *karāmāt* or charismatic powers were—as Ibn ᶜArabī himself observes[125]—famous throughout the Maghreb. He seems to have had the ability to read people's thoughts, penetrate their hearts—and, above all, to master wild cats. Ibn Ḥirzihim, described by Tādilī as a jurist (*faqīh*) and *ḥāfiẓ*,[126] was more erudite. He had studied the works of

120. ᶜAfīfī, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muyid-din Ibnul Arabī*, London 1964, p.183. For the Neoplatonising influence exerted by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' on Ibn ᶜArabī's thought cf. pp.121, 183–6.

121. For the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' or 'Brethren of Purity' cf. S.H. Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, Cambridge Mass. 1964; Yves Marquet, *La Philosophie des Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', études et documents*, Algiers 1975.

122. ᶜAfīfī, *Mystical Philosophy*, p.121.

123. A third trend or current—more marginal and less representative in quantitative terms—began to emerge in the time of Ibn ᶜArabī, with Abū ᶜAbd Allāh al-Shūdhī and his disciple Ibn al-Mar'a (*d.* 611/1214) as its chief representatives. (For these two men cf. Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallāj*, II, pp.309–17, and É. Dermenghem, *Le Culte des saints en Islam maghrébin*, Paris 1982, pp.89–95.) This trend became established with Ibn Sabᶜīn (*d.* 669/1270) and his school.

124. For Abū Yaᶜzā cf. *Tashawwuf*, § 77, pp.213–22; É. Dermenghem, op. cit., pp.59–70.

125. *Fut.*, IV, pp.50–1; also II, p.637.

126. *Tashawwuf*, § 51, pp.168–73.

Muḥāsibī and expressed great admiration for Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn*. According to Tādilī it would seem that he spent some time in prison.

It was with Abū Madyan that the Sufi trend which is unique to the Maghreb really asserted itself. Originally from the region of Seville, Abū Madyan lived for a while in Fez, where he met Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Daqqāq—a rather extravagant Sufi, according to the hagiographers—who seems to have passed on to him the *khirqa*.[127] In Fez he also met Ibn Ḥirzihim, who taught him the works of Muḥāsibī and Ghazālī; and in addition he became a disciple of Abū Yaʿzā. After a voyage to Mecca where he possibly encountered ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (*d.* 560/1165), he settled in Bougie.[128]

The sheer number of Abū Madyan's disciples—some of whom spread his teaching in the East[129]—helps to explain the privileged position he occupies in all Sufism, both Western and Eastern.[130] This makes it all the more regrettable that no proper and comprehensive study has yet been devoted to such a major figure in the *taṣawwuf* of the Maghreb. Ibn ʿArabī was to have many teachers who were disciples of Abū Madyan: Yūsuf al-Kūmī, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Mahdawī, ʿAbd Allāh al-Mawrūrī and a considerable number of others, as we will see.[131] References in his writings to the saint of Bougie are far too numerous to be listed here; a statistical study would easily show that of all the Sufis whom he mentions, it is Abū Madyan—whom he never even met—to whom Ibn ʿArabī refers most often.[132] This preference is not due just to the influence which Abū Madyan exerted on him through the medium of his disciples: there were also certain points that they shared in common, as we will soon see.

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To sum up: there can be no doubting whatever that Ibn ʿArabī was influenced by elements of doctrine which derived from representatives of both these two

127. For Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Daqqāq cf. A. Bel, 'Sidi Bou Medyan et son maître Ed-Daqqâq à Fès', in *Mélanges René Basset*, Paris 1923, I, pp.31–68. Regarding investiture with the *khirqa*, or 'frock', see in more detail below, chapter 6.

128. For Abū Madyan cf. *Tashawwuf*, § 162, pp.319–26; Ibn Qunfudh, *Uns al-faqīr wa ʿizz al-ḥaqīr*, Rabat 1965; *EI*² s.v. Abū Madyan; É. Dermenghem, *Culte des saints*, pp.71–86 and *Vies des saints musulmans*, Paris 1983, pp.249–63.

129. Cf. pp.27–8 of D. Gril's introduction to the *Risāla* of Ṣafī al-Dīn b. Abī Manṣūr.

130. It is worth emphasizing that Ibn ʿArabī greatly contributed to making him known in Oriental Sufi circles through his own works, in which he cites Abū Madyan repeatedly and with extreme veneration.

131. For a table listing Ibn ʿArabī's affiliations with the various Sufi currents in the Islamic West, see Appendix 2.

132. See for example *Fut.*, I, pp.184, 221, 244, 280, 448, 480; II, pp.201, 222, 233; III, pp.94, 117, 396; IV, pp.50, 141, 195, 264; *Tadbīrāt ilāhiyya*, ed. Nyberg, 1919, pp.126, 158–59; *Mawāqiʿ al-nūjum*, Cairo 1965, pp.89, 140.

major trends—the one Andalusian, the other from the Maghreb—and that his own writings bear their imprint in numerous places. However, the extraordinary bulk of his writings, plus the sheer diversity and complexity of the themes he develops, makes it difficult (and, within the framework of this particular study, impossible) to attempt any precise evaluation of the extent to which he is indebted to Andalusian Sufis for his own ideas—ideas that in many respects are so subtle and original. And yet regardless of their particular leanings or affiliations, his teachers did not confine themselves to transmitting to him their doctrinal convictions or initiating him into the mysteries of metaphysics. Through the advice they offered him and through the practices they prescribed for him they helped him overcome the many different obstacles which stand in the way of whoever undertakes the quest for the Red Sulphur.

THE MASTERS OF SEVILLE

AFTER Abū Madyan, the teacher whom Ibn ʿArabī probably mentions most frequently in the *Futūḥāt* is Abū l-ʿAbbās al-ʿUryabī.[133] Clearly the times he spent in the company of this illiterate peasant from Ulya[134] in the Algarve had a profound effect upon him. It is also significant that among the recommendations (*waṣāyā*) of Ibn ʿArabī which Ismāʿīl b. Sawdakīn transcribed in his *Kitāb wasā'il al-sā'il*, several derive from Abū l-ʿAbbās al-ʿUryabī. So, for example, the following prayer which Ibn ʿArabī was to make his own: 'Oh Lord, nourish me not with love but with the desire for love' (*Rabbī urzuqnī shahwat al-ḥubb lā l-ḥubb*).[135]

This influence—which is especially evident in Ibn ʿArabī's initial attachment to the practice of *dhikr* using the divine Name 'Allāh' alone[136]—is hardly surprising. For a start, 'Uryabī was his *murshid al-awwal*, his first teacher: a relationship which is always of special significance in Sufism. Secondly—and this is probably the most decisive factor of all—ʿUryabī was governed by the state of *ʿubūdiyya*, or total servitude. 'My master Abū l-ʿAbbās al-ʿUryabī, who was the first teacher whom I served and received graces from, had one foot planted firmly in this domain—the domain of servitude.'[137] Now in Ibn ʿArabī's eyes the state of *ʿubūdiyya* surpasses all

133. Cf. *Fut.*, I, pp.186, 223, 244, 329, 574; II, pp.177, 224, 325, 687; III, pp.208, 532, 539; IV, pp.89, 243, 482, 497, 529.

134. Nowadays called Loulé, near Silves in Portugal.

135. *Kitāb wasā'il*, p.4; *Fut.*, II, p.325.

136. *Fut.*, III, pp.298, 300.

137. *Fut.*, III, p.539.

others. It is the state every disciple must aspire to and the goal of spiritual realisation, because it represents the return to the original state: to the ontological nothingness of the creature or created being. Whoever has realised *ʿubūdiyya* or servitude has stripped himself of *rubūbiyya*, of the 'Lordship' which really belongs to God alone but which ordinary men in their arrogance claim for themselves. According to Ibn ʿArabī the state of such a person is comparable to a stone that falls where it is thrown; he is literally *ʿabd Allāh*, the slave of God. In a sense it can be said that Ibn ʿArabī's entire teaching as embodied in his writings has as its sole aim to guide his 'spiritual children' (we will see in due course why the term 'children', rather than 'sons', has to be used) towards that state of servitude to which ʿUryabī had guided him. 'Be a pure servant! (*kun ʿabdan maḥḍan*) . . .. That is what I was advised by my shaikh and master Abū l-ʿAbbās al-ʿUryabī.'[138] It will emerge later that the only people who realise the state of *ʿubūdiyya* fully are the *malāmiyya*, the 'People of Blame'.

Finally, there is the fact that Shaikh ʿUryabī was in a sense responsible for the first meeting between Ibn ʿArabī and Khaḍir, that mysterious interlocutor of Moses: the master of the 'masterless', he who is the supreme possessor of the *ʿilm ladunī*, the 'knowledge inherent in God'.[139] This initial meeting took place in Seville when Ibn ʿArabī was still a youth, and it was to be the first in a series of interventions by Khaḍir in his spiritual destiny which would culminate in his double investiture with the *khirqa khaḍiriyya*, the 'initiatic mantle' transmitting the *baraka* of Khaḍir: firstly at Seville in 592 and then at Mosul in 601.

Before telling the story of this first encounter with Khaḍir, it is worth pointing out that Muḥyī l-Dīn was only around twenty years old when he met ʿUryabī. The following episode occurred at the start of this companionship, as he himself says (*fī bidāyati amrī*). His youthfulness excuses—or at least explains—the lack of *adab* or propriety which, on his own admission, he showed. He still had a great deal to learn about the rules of proper behaviour which normally govern the relationship between disciple and master. 'A difference of opinion arose between me and my master Abū l-ʿAbbās al-ʿUryabī, regarding the identity of a person whose coming the Prophet had announced. He [Shaikh ʿUryabī] said to me, "The reference is to so-and-so, son of so-and-so", and he mentioned someone whom I knew by name; I had never seen the person but I had met his cousin. I expressed scepticism and refused to accept what the shaikh said about this individual, because I had an

138. *Fut.*, IV, p.482.

139. For Khaḍir cf. *EI*² s.v.; Massignon, *Opera minora*, I, pp.142–61; Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, pp.53–63.

infallible perception (*baṣīra*) regarding the man in question. As it happens, there can be no doubting the fact that later the shaikh changed his opinion. But he suffered inwardly [as a result of my attitude], although I was unaware of this because at the time I was only in my early stages. I left him to return home. On the way I was accosted by someone whom I did not know. First of all this person greeted me, with a great deal of love and affection in his gesture. Then he said to me: "Accept what Shaikh Abū l-ʿAbbās says about so-and-so!" I understood what he was asking. I immediately returned to the shaikh to let him know what had happened to me. When I appeared before him he said to me: "Oh Abū ʿAbd Allāh, is it going to be necessary for Khaḍir to come to you every time you hesitate to admit what I say, and tell you: 'Accept what so-and-so says'? And how is that going to happen each time you refuse to accept my opinion?" I replied: "The door of repentance is open". He said: "The repentance is accepted".'[140]

Ibn ʿArabī refers again to the incident in another passage from the *Futūḥāt*; this time, as well as mentioning the traditional ideas about Khaḍir he gives some additional details. 'Khaḍir's name is Balyā b. Malikān . . .. He was in an army and was sent by the commander in search of water, which they had run short of. He discovered and drank from the Source of Life, and so it is that he is still living now; he had no idea that God had granted immortality to whoever drinks that water. I met him in Seville, and he taught me to submit to spiritual masters and not contradict them. In fact on that very day I had contradicted one of my teachers on a particular issue, and was just leaving him. I then encountered Khaḍir in the quarter of the Qūs al-ḥaniyya,[141] and he said to me: "Accept what the shaikh says!" I returned immediately to the shaikh. When I arrived at his place, even before I could speak a word he said to me: "Oh Muḥammad, does this mean that every time you contradict me I will have to ask Khaḍir to instruct you in submission to the masters?" I replied: "Master, are you saying that the person who gave me this instruction was Khaḍir?" He answered: "Yes!" I said in reply: "Glory be to God for this teaching. But even so, things will turn out just as I said they would!" Some time later I visited the shaikh and saw that he had come round to my opinion. He said to me: "It was I who was wrong and you who were right". I replied: "Master, now I understand why Khaḍir only instructed me in submission and did not say that you were right in the matter. To the extent that legal statutes (*aḥkām mashrūʿa*) were not involved, I ought not to have contra-

140. *Fut.*, I, p.186.

141. Asín Palacios (*Islam cristianizado*, p.50) translates this name as 'grain market'; perhaps he read *sūq* instead of *qūs*, but this still fails to explain his translation of *ḥaniyya*. In fact it is the name of a quarter containing a mosque of the same name: cf. *Fut.*, I, p.331.

dicted you; but if they had been involved it would have been forbidden me to stay silent".'[142]

Apart from the fact that this incident led to the meeting with Khaḍir, it also testifies to the paradoxical nature of the master-disciple relationship in Ibn ʿArabī's case. Undeniably he neglected even the most elementary rules of propriety with regard to ʿUryabī by contradicting him on a point of only secondary importance, because the *sharīʿa* was not at stake. The issue on which Ibn ʿArabī disagreed with his teacher clearly had to do with the identity of the Mahdī, whose coming had in fact been announced by the Prophet and whom ʿUryabī thought he recognised in one of his contemporaries. However, it emerges from the second account that if Ibn ʿArabī was wrong in his attitude, he was right as far as the heart of the matter was concerned. This was why Khaḍir did not tell him he was mistaken but simply said he should submit to his master. It was a piece of advice that Ibn ʿArabī put into practice quite literally, because although he repented of his attitude he would not budge from his position ('Even so, things will turn out just as I said they would!'). As a disciple, *murīd*, Ibn ʿArabī was hierarchically inferior to ʿUryabī and owed him his obedience; as a gnostic (*ʿārif*) endowed with an inner certainty (*baṣīra*), he spoke the truth and in this particular instance surpassed his master.

It is worth clarifying one point here once and for all: this has to do with the ambiguous nature of Ibn ʿArabī's relationship to his teachers. The ambiguity becomes quite apparent even from the most cursory reading of the biographical sketches of his teachers which he provides in the *Rūḥ al-quds* and the *Durrat al-fākhira*. If we adhere to the explanations that he himself gives, it was due to two causes: firstly, the exceptional talents and charismata with which he was favoured from a very early age, and which made him an altogether exceptional disciple; secondly, it was a result of the function he was called upon to exercise in the sphere of sainthood or *walāya*. In Ibn ʿArabī's case the *sulūk*—the 'wayfaring', or methodical progression along the Path under the direction of teachers—did not correspond to any personal need to achieve spiritual realisation because, as we have already seen, he had received this from the very start. When he met ʿUryabī he was only a novice in appearance. And yet, however great his spiritual capacity, every 'knower of God' (*ʿārif bi llāh*) must submit to education and initiation (*tarbiya*) at the hands of a teacher—whether living or dead[143]—who will instruct him in the

142. *Fut.*, III, p.336.

143. I am alluding here to the case of the '*uwaysiyya*'—those who are trained by a master who died sometimes decades or even centuries earlier. There is the famous example of Shaikh Abū l-Ḥasan Kharaqānī (*d.* 425/1034), who was trained by the spiritual influx (*rūḥāniyya*) of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī: cf. Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt*, p.298; also the articles by J.T.P. de Bruijn in *EI*² and by H. Lambert in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. Kharaqānī.

techniques that will enable him to become the master of his talents and know himself. In other words, in the case of the Shaikh al-Akbar the fact that as a disciple he owed obedience to his teachers did not prevent him from being superior to them in gnosis. This is even more so because, in conformity with the particular function to which he would later lay claim, he was strictly speaking 'beyond categories', and as such the only created being to whom he was answerable was—and could only be—the prophet Muḥammad. In this sense it is legitimate to maintain that really Ibn ʿArabī had no teacher. At least potentially, during the period that concerns us, and fully and effectively later on, he affirmed that he possessed the highest degree of realisation of sainthood (*walāya*).

In this connection it is worth citing the instructions given to him by the 'Imām of the Left' during their encounter in subtle form. '... This Imām showers created beings with benefits and blessings without their being aware of the fact. He did so in my case by announcing to me some good news about my state, which I was unaware of even though it was my own state, and by informing me about it. He also forbade me to affiliate myself (*al-intimā'*) with the teachers whom I was frequenting, and said to me: "Affiliate yourself to none but God, for *none of those whom you have met has authority over you* (*laysa li aḥad minman laqaytahu ʿalayka yad*). No, it is God Himself who through His Goodness has taken you in His charge (*Allāh tawallāka*). Mention if you wish the virtues of those whom you meet, but affiliate yourself to God, not to them". *The state of this Imām was equivalent to my own* (*kāna ḥāl hādhā l-imām mithla ḥālī sawā*), because none of those whom he had frequented had authority over him. I was told as much by trustworthy people (*al-thiqa*), and he himself informed me of this at the time of our meeting in the "intermediary realm" (*fī mashhad barzakh*)'.[144]

To appreciate fully the implications of this verbal exchange between Ibn ʿArabī and the Imām of the Left, we need to refer briefly to what Ibn ʿArabī himself has to say about the hierarchy of initiation at the start of the twelfth volume of the *Futūḥāt*. At the summit of the pyramid are the four Pillars (*awtād*), with first of all the Pole (*quṭb*), followed by the 'Imām of the Left', then the 'Imām of the Right' and finally the fourth Pillar. The true holders of these functions are the four prophets, who are considered by Islamic tradition to be always living: Idrīs, Jesus, Elijah and Khaḍir. Idris is the Pole, Jesus and Elijah are the two Imāms, and Khaḍir the fourth Pillar. Each of these prophets permanently has a substitute (*nā'ib*) in the world below: a man who fulfils the function in question. The Pillars—both the titular ones and the substitutes—belong to the category of *afrād*, or 'solitary ones'. 'Their equivalents among

144. *Fut.*, II, p.573.

the angels are the *muhayyamūn*: the spirits overcome by love in the Divine Majesty, in other words the Cherubim (*karrūbiyyūn*) . . .. Their station (*maqām*) is intermediate between the station of the "confirmation of truth" (*ṣiddīqiyya*) and the station of legislative prophecy (*nubuwwat al-tashrīᶜ*) . . .. It is the station of free prophecy (*al-nubuwwa al-muṭlaqa*)'.[145]

No one has authority over the Pillars: they know and acknowledge God alone, who Himself takes charge of teaching them. Moses' famous adventure with Khaḍir (Qur'ān 18:59–81) is a good example of this independence on the part of the Pillars. So, when Ibn ᶜArabī declares that his state is equivalent to the state of the Imām of the Left (or in fact of the 'substitute' who was fulfilling his function at that particular time) he is clearly suggesting that they both belong equally to the category of the 'solitary ones'. Indeed it is even probable that the 'good news' which the Imām announced to him regarding his state refers to precisely this point; that would explain why he goes on to advise him not to become identified with any teacher, because it is 'God Himself who has taken you in His charge'.

As to the identity of the person who had assumed the function of Imām of the Left at the time of this encounter between him and Ibn ᶜArabī, there are a number of reasons for supposing it was Abū Madyan (*d.* 594H). Ibn ᶜArabī in fact states on several occasions that Abū Madyan was the Imām of the Left, and that an hour before his death he succeeded to the previous Pole;[146] he explains that this information was conveyed to him in a vision by Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭamī.[147] It also emerges very clearly from his account that he had never met this Imām of the Left except in the spirit. Now as it happens, in a biographical sketch in the *Rūḥ* which we will examine more closely later, he describes how one day Abū Madyan sent him the following message. 'Regarding our meeting in the subtle world there is no question: it will happen. Regarding our physical encounter in this world, God will not permit it.'[148]

It must be said straight away that Ibn ᶜArabī did not only include himself among the 'solitary ones'; on his own admission he was also one of the four Pillars. 'To each Pillar (*watad*) belongs one corner of the corners of the House [the Kaᶜba]. The Syrian corner belongs to him who is on the heart of Adam; the Iraqi corner to him who is on the heart of Abraham; the Yemenite corner

145. *Fut.*, II, p.19. For Ibn ᶜArabī's teaching about the Pillars and the hierarchy of initiation cf. Michel Chodkiewicz, *The Seal of the Saints*, chapter 6.

146. *Fut.*, I, p.184; II, p.201; IV, p.195; and especially *Kitāb manzil al-quṭb*, in *Rasā'il*, pp.11–12.

147. *Mawāqiᶜ al-nujūm*, p.140; Ibn ᶜArabī adds that he knew his successor very well.

148. *Rūḥ*, pp.113–14; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.121.

to him who is on the heart of Jesus; and the corner of the Black Rock to him who is on the heart of Muḥammad—and this is my corner, God be praised!'[149] Ibn ᶜArabī goes on to specify that the Sufi Rabīᶜ b. Maḥmūd al-Mardīnī[150] was in his own time one of the Pillars and was replaced at his death by someone else; he also states that, apart from himself, there was a Persian (*rajul fārisī*) and an Ethiopian (*rajul ḥabashī*).[151] However, this piece of evidence does pose a problem. If we compare it with another passage in the *Futūḥāt* where Ibn ᶜArabī asserts that the Pole corresponds to the corner of the Black Stone,[152] it is tempting to deduce that he himself was the Pole. But as we will soon see, according to his own explicit statement[153] the supreme function which he exercised was incompatible with this function of *quṭb*.

Whatever the case here may be, the fact is that Ibn ᶜArabī was still a young man when he entered the Path. As he himself emphasises, spiritual graces received in the early stages are extremely dangerous for the novice who has not previously practised *riyāḍa*, initiatic discipline. This was precisely his own situation. In such a case the company of shaikhs, their advice and their protection are essential if the novice is to avoid the danger of backward-sliding or, even worse, of going astray. And as there was an abundance of saints in Seville, Ibn ᶜArabī was to go knocking at their doors so as to derive benefit from their teaching and their *baraka*.

For the Shaikh al-Akbar there was nothing to prevent a disciple having several teachers. On the contrary, he states at the end of the *Kitāb nasab al-khirqa* that only the ignorant have invented this rule: 'Be assured that there is no stipulation in the obligatory conditions of initiatic investiture and spiritual companionship that this garment [*khirqa*] must be received from one person alone. No one has ever imposed such a condition. It is an established fact that one of the men of the Path has said: "Whoever wishes to see three hundred men in one man has only to look at me, for I have followed three hundred teachers and from each of them I have derived a quality"... . Investiture [with the *khirqa*] simply consists of keeping the company of a master and practising his spiritual discipline, and that does not involve any restriction in number. In stating these facts I am referring to certain ignorant people

149. *Fut.*, I, p.160.

150. For Rabīᶜ al-Mardīnī cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-mīzān*, Hyderabad 1329H, II, pp.446–48.

151. Probably the reference is to Badr al-Ḥabashī, Ibn ᶜArabī's companion. This is the implication of the passage in the *Futūḥāt* (I, p.10) where—speaking of himself, Ḥabashī and two other individuals—Ibn ᶜArabī states: 'We were the four Pillars'.

152. *Fut.*, II, p.5.

153. *Fut.*, IV, p.77. An explanation of this apparent discrepancy may lie in the fact that according to Ibn ᶜArabī some *afrād*, or 'solitary ones', are actually superior to the Pole in respect of their knowledge of God (*Fut.*, III, p.137). This is especially the case with the Seal of the Saints—the function Ibn ᶜArabī claimed for himself.

who imagine that one is only entitled to receive the *khirqa* from one person alone'.[154]

At this particular period in the Islamic West it was normal and even commonplace to follow the spiritual teaching of several Sufi masters simultaneously. *Ṣuḥba*, 'spiritual companionship', was still an informal practice and had not yet acquired the characteristics of a structured and more or less regulated institution that it began to assume at the close of the twelfth century—and even more definitively in the thirteenth century—in the East, where an organised and therefore more rigid system came into being which would soon be given the name of *ṭarīqa*. This means that at that time there was a certain discrepancy between Oriental Sufism and Andalusian Sufism. Sufism in the East was induced for various different reasons to implement this progressive structuring, and this became especially evident in the growth of a community strength of spiritual life as attested by the proliferation virtually everywhere of *khānqāhs*. In Andalusia, on the other hand, the quest for God remained to a large extent a purely individual undertaking, free and flexible. These differences in emphasis could naturally lead to reciprocal misunderstandings, and these were sometimes aggravated by a certain contemptuous attitude on the part of Orientals towards people in the Maghreb and Andalusia. Ibn ᶜArabī was to have bitter personal experience of this on his arrival in the East when—in a Cairo *khānqāh* in 598H—a shaikh from Irbil made some highly offensive remarks to him about Andalusian Sufis, who according to this man knew nothing about the Path.[155] It would appear that this criticism was one of the reasons which encouraged Ibn ᶜArabī some time later to write the *Rūḥ al-quds*, in which he highlights the virtues, the qualities and the spiritual knowledge of the Sufis he had known in the Islamic West.

Having a variety of spiritual directors did, however, pose some problems. The disciple could find himself in a situation where he was confronted with instructions that were apparently contradictory. As Ibn ᶜArabī writes in the *Futūḥāt*: 'One day I went to see my teacher Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-ᶜUryabī while I was in this state [of confusion]; I was troubled at the sight of men disobeying God. He said to me: "My companion, occupy yourself with God!" I left him and went to Shaikh Abū ᶜImrān al-Mīrtūlī, still in the same state of mind. He said: "Occupy yourself with your soul!" I replied: "Master, I am in a state of perplexity: Shaikh Abū l-ᶜAbbās tells me to occupy myself with God but you tell me to occupy myself with my soul. And yet both of you are guides towards God!" Abū ᶜImrān started weeping, and said to me: "My friend, Abū l-ᶜAbbās has directed you towards God, and the Return is to Him. Each of us has directed you in accordance with his spiritual state (*ḥāl*). I hope that God will

154. *Kitāb nasab al-khirqa*, Esad Efendi MS., 1507, ff^os 98–98b. 155. *Rūḥ*, p.27.

make me reach the station of Abū l-ᶜAbbās. So listen to him: that will be better for you and for me". I returned to Shaikh Abū l-ᶜAbbās and told him what Abū ᶜImrān had said. He said to me: "Take account of his advice, for he has pointed out to you the path (*al-ṭarīq*) whereas I have pointed out to you the Companion (*al-rafīq*). You should therefore act in accordance with what he has told you and in accordance with what I have told you".'[156]

Abū ᶜImrān Mūsā b. ᶜImrān al-Mīrtūlī (*d.* 604/1207) came, as his name indicates, from the fortress of Mertola where Ibn Qasī had established his headquarters.[157] He subsequently settled in Seville, and it was there that Ibn ᶜArabī became his companion. 'I experienced some marvellous times with him. His spiritual energy was closely linked with God for the purpose of safeguarding and protecting me against seductions and regressions, and in this he was successful. He himself attested to this and announced it to me.'[158]

Ibn ᶜArabī very probably met Mīrtūlī shortly after meeting ᶜUryabī—in any case by 580/1184 at the latest. In both the *Futūḥāt* and the *Durra*[159] he describes an incident in which he himself and his teacher Mīrtūlī had a confrontation with ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. ᶜUfayr, who denied the miraculous powers of saints. At the time, Ibn ᶜUfayr was Seville's *khaṭīb* or city scribe. It was he who in 577/1182 inaugurated the great mosque built during the reign of Yūsuf Abū Yaᶜqūb. According to Ibn al-Abbār (*d.* 658/1259) he died in around 580/1184.[160]

Mīrtūlī's teaching appears to have focussed essentially on the mortification of the soul (hence his advice to the young Muḥyī l-Dīn) and on asceticism (*zuhd*). On this theme of asceticism he composed a collection of poems[161] which merited a reference to him by several compilers such as Ibn al-Abbār, who describes him as a companion of Ibn Mujāhid—a famous ascetic who doubled as a poet.[162] Ibn al-Abbār seems not to have suspected that the author of the *Dīwān* was himself a saint; but the fact did not escape Ibn ᶜArabī. At the start of the second volume of the *Futūḥāt*, where he enumerates the different categories of saints, he reveals that Mīrtūlī was one of 'the men whom God assists and who in their turn assist created beings' (*rijāl al-imdād al-ilāhī wa l-kawnī*): 'In every age there are three—neither more nor less. They seek assistance from God and give assistance to created beings with kindness, gentleness and mercy as opposed to violence, harshness or severity. They

156. *Fut.*, II, p.177. 157. Marrākushī, *Muᶜjib*, p.50.
158. *Rūḥ*, § 8, p.91; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.88.
159. *Fut.*, II, p.6; *Durra*, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.89.
160. *Tak.*, ed. Codera, § 1608.
161. *Durra*, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.89, where Ibn ᶜArabī mentions that Mīrtūlī transmitted this collection to him.
162. *Tak.*, ed. Codera, § 2147; cf. also Maqqarī, *Nafḥ*, II, pp.27, 487; III, pp.225, 296.

turn to God so as to derive benefit from Him, and then turn to created beings so as to benefit them . . .. I met one of them in Seville. He was one of the greatest spiritual men I have known: his name was Mūsā b. ᶜImrān, the master of his time'.[163]

It was very probably from his own teacher, Ibn Mujāhid (*d.* 574/1178), that Mīrtūlī inherited his strong taste for asceticism. Described by the author of the *Nayl al-ibtihāj* as the 'ascetic of Andalusia', *zāhid al-Andalus*,[164] Ibn Mujāhid was one of the most famous Andalusian Sufis of his time. Ibn al-Abbār himself testifies to his sainthood: 'He was in his time the point of reference in matters of virtue (*ṣalāḥ*), scrupulousness (*waraᶜ*) and worship. He was one of the servants of God and one of His saints . . .. His miracles are known to everyone, not to mention his competency in jurisprudence (*fiqh*) as well as in readings from the Qur'ān (*al-qirā'āt*)'.[165] In this particular instance Ibn ᶜArabī and the Andalusian historian are of the same opinion; in fact Ibn ᶜArabī places Ibn Mujāhid in the highest category of *malāmiyya*, or 'People of Blame'.[166] Some ambiguous statements in the *Futūḥāt* would seem to suggest that he had met Ibn Mujāhid in person during his youth (that is, before 574H); he possibly learned the Qur'ān from him while still an adolescent.[167] In any case he had obtained from him an *ijāza ᶜāmma* (an authorisation '*in absentia*'), which however does not necessarily imply that he had attended his classes.[168]

The spiritual method of Ibn Mujāhid was characterised chiefly by the meticulous practice of *muḥāsabat al-nafs*—that is, the daily examination of one's conscience. He transmitted the details of this practice to one of his disciples, Abū ᶜAbd Allāh b. Qassūm, who taught them in turn to Ibn ᶜArabī. 'I have known two men who were like this: Abū ᶜAbd Allāh b. Mujāhid and Abū ᶜAbd Allāh b. Qassūm. I knew them both in Seville. They possessed this station and were poles among the "men of energetic intention" (*al-rijāl al-niyyātiyyūn*). When I in turn arrived at this station myself I imitated them and their companions, obeying the instruction of the Messenger of God when he commanded: "Demand accounts of yourself" (*ḥāsibū anfusakum*).[169] Our teachers accordingly had the habit of keeping accounts of what they said and did, and recording everything in a notebook. After the evening prayer they

163. *Fut.*, II, p.13.
164. Aḥmad Bābā, *Nayl al-ibtihāj*, p.227.
165. *Tak.*, ed. Codera, § 779.
166. *Fut.*, III, p.34. He devotes a biographical sketch to him in the *Durra*, § 56 = *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.146–8. Cf. also *Fut.*, I, pp.211, 358; II, p.628; III, p.34; IV, p.532.
167. *Fut.*, I, p.358.
168. *Ijāza*, p.181.
169. The complete text of this *ḥadīth* is: *ḥāsibū anfusakum qabla an tuḥāsabū* (Tirmidhī, *qiyāma*, 65).

would isolate themselves in their own homes so as to demand accounts of themselves. They would take up their notebook, examine their actions and words during the course of the day, and render to each of their actions whatever it deserved. If it merited the request for forgiveness, they requested forgiveness; if it merited repentance, they repented . . .. I did even more than them, because I also recorded my thoughts (*khawāṭir*); that is, in addition to my acts and words I noted down all the thoughts that crossed my mind.'[170]

Ibn ᶜArabī mentions that he was the companion of Ibn Qassūm (*d.* approx. 606/1209) for almost seventeen years.[171] Considering that he left Andalusia for good in approximately 596/597, this implies that he already knew him in around 580/581—that is, at a time when he was also the disciple of Mīrtūlī and ᶜUryabī. He specifies that, in addition to the daily examination of conscience, Ibn Qassūm transmitted to him all the rules relating to ritual purity and prayer. Jurist (*faqīh*), ascetic and excellent grammarian: that is how this other disciple of Ibn Mujāhid is presented to us by the author of the *Takmila*.[172] But here again it would be a mistake to judge by appearances alone. According to Ibn ᶜArabī this jurist—with apparently nothing to distinguish him from the other ᶜ*ulamā*' in Seville apart from the austerity and self-deprivation which he imposed on himself—was, just like his teacher, one of the *malāmiyya*, the 'People of Blame'.[173]

The *malāmiyya*, too, are 'solitary ones' (*afrād*); but in their particular case they are viewed not in relation to their function or position but solely with regard to their spiritual state. The *malāmī* is a pure servant (ᶜ*abd maḥḍ*). His one and only desire—if any desire still remains in him—is to conform strictly to the divine will. Stripped of his ego, he has renounced all free will (*ikhtiyār*). As Ibn ᶜArabī puts it: 'The *malāmiyya* are spiritual men (*al-rijāl*) who have assumed the highest degree of sainthood (*walāya*). There is nothing higher than them except the station of prophecy. [Their station] is the one referred to as the Station of Proximity (*maqām al-qurba*)[174] . . .. No miracles (*kharq ᶜādat*) are ascribed to them. They are not admired, because in the eyes of men they are not distinguished by behaviour which is ostensibly virtuous . . .. They are the hidden ones, the pure ones, the ones in this world who are sure and sound, concealed among men . . .. They are the solitary ones (*al-afrād*).'[175]

170. *Fut.*, I, p.211; cf. also *Fut.*, II, p.628.
171. *Durra*, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.87. Regarding this master cf. also *Rūḥ*, § 7, pp.88–90; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.83–7; *Fut.*, I, p.358; III, p.34; IV, p.532.
172. *Tak.*, ed. Codera, § 899.
173. *Fut.*, III, p.34.
174. It has been noted elsewhere that Ibn ᶜArabī also uses the expression *nubuwwa ᶜāmma*, 'general prophecy', in designating this station. Cf. M.Chodkiewicz, *The Seal of the Saints*, chapter 7.
175. *Fut.*, I, p.181. Concerning the *malāmiyya*, cf. *The Seal of the Saints*, chapter 7.

Elsewhere, Ibn ᶜArabī also specifies that the 'solitary ones' fall into two categories: those who use their spiritual energy (*rukkāb al-himam*) as their 'mount', and those who use their acts (*rukkāb al-aᶜmāl*). Those in the first category have chosen not to intervene in the affairs of this low world and not to exercise any function. On the other hand, those in the second category find themselves compelled—by divine command, that is—to exercise authority and assume a function of 'government' (*tadbīr*); the most eminent example is the case of the Pole. These are the *mudabbirūn*, the 'Directors'. They are superior to those in the first category because, following the example of the prophets, they have returned from God to created beings—without, however, leaving God, for in every single thing at every instant they perceive the *wajhu llāh*, the Face of God. But it must be clearly understood that the first category as well as those in the second have fully and totally realised *ᶜubūdiyya*, the service of God.

Ibn ᶜArabī tells us that four of the spiritual masters whose company he kept as a young man in Seville were among these 'Directors'. This is the picture he draws of them in chapter 32 of the *Futūḥāt*—a chapter devoted specifically to this category of saints: 'At Seville in Andalusia I encountered several individuals who belonged to this category. One of them was Abū Yaḥyā al-Ṣanhājī the blind. He lived in the Zubaydī mosque. I was his companion until he died. He was buried on a high mountain which is very windy, towards the east. Everyone found it difficult to climb the mountain because of its height and because of the wind that blew without ceasing. But God stilled the wind, which stopped blowing the moment we laid him on the earth. We then began digging his grave and erecting his stele. When we had finished doing this we laid him in his tomb and left. As soon as we had moved away, the wind started blowing again as usual, and everyone was amazed.[176]

'Ṣāliḥ al-Barbarī,[177] Abū ᶜAbd Allāh al-Sharafī[178] and Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Shubarbulī[179] also belonged to this category. Ṣāliḥ wandered (*sāḥa*) for forty years and then remained at Seville in the al-Rutandalī mosque for another forty years, in the same state of self-deprivation which he had known during

176. Cf. *Rūḥ*, § 5, p.85; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.79. This person is not to be confused with the man of the same name who is the subject of sketch 29 in the *Rūḥ*, and whom we will come to later.

177. For this master cf. *Rūḥ*, § 3, pp.82–3; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.73–6; *Fut.*, I, p.206; II, p.15, III, p.488. There will be more to say about him later and about the role he played at one particular moment in Ibn ᶜArabī's life.

178. Cf. *Rūḥ*, pp.83–4; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.76–9. This shaikh earned his living by selling opium and had the power—characteristic of the 'substitutes' or *abdāl*—of being able to traverse large distances in a single pace. Every year in Seville his absence was noted at the time of the pilgrimage.

179. Cf. *Fut.*, I, pp.206, 274, 358; III, p.34; *Rūḥ*, § 6, pp.85–6; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.79–83; *Tak.*, ed. Codera, § 2083.

his years of wandering. As for Abū ᶜAbd Allāh al-Sharafī, he was one of those men for whom distances were annulled (*ṣāḥib khaṭwa*). For nearly fifty years he never lit a lamp in his home, and I have seen him do some extraordinary things. As for Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Shubarbulī (he came from a village called Shubarbul, to the east of Seville), he was one of those men who have the power to walk on water and who are frequented by spirits. There is not one of these men whose company I have not kept, to whom I have not been linked in friendship, and who did not love me . . .. So it is that these four men belonged to this station (*maqām*); they were among the greatest of the *malāmiyya* saints'.[180]

The evidence is not to be denied. From the very start—one could say forever—Ibn ᶜArabī's spiritual vocation appears to have been carefully guarded and protected by the Solitary Ones (*afrād*). Like guardian angels they are present all along his route, everywhere and at all times, at every bend and every stopping place. From Jesus, the Imām of the Right who accepted his *tawba* or 'conversion', through the fourth Pillar—Khaḍir—who called him to order and the Imām of the Left who warned him, to the *malāmiyya* of Seville who instructed him and trained him, everything comes to pass just as if the 'solitary ones' had assembled or re-assembled to form an impenetrable barrier around the young Andalusian.

180. *Fut.*, I, p.206.

3. Election

CORDOBA: THE GREAT VISION

586, 594, 598: Ibn ᶜArabī's spiritual destiny hinges around these three dates. To each one of them corresponds a major episode in one and the same basic event. Already with the first of these episodes the story or history of the Shaikh al-Akbar ceased to be a simply individual adventure: for himself and for his disciples his own story had already merged with the history of sainthood itself. To be more precise it became the axis of that history, as the 'solitary ones' had perhaps already sensed. Somewhere something important, something prodigious, was in preparation; a new chapter in sacred history was beginning. The whole universe, celestial and terrestrial, became the theatre in which this divine play was to be acted out.

Ibn ᶜArabī describes the first act: 'I saw all the prophets from Adam down to Muḥammad. God also showed me everyone who believes in them—all those who have been and all those who will be until the Day of Resurrection, from the greatest to the smallest'.[1] Another passage in the *Futūḥāt* provides some additional details: 'I saw with my eyes (*ra'aytu mushāhadata ᶜayn*) all the Messengers and prophets. Among them I spoke to Hūd,[2] the brother of ᶜĀd. I also saw with my eyes all the believers—those who have been and those who will be until the Day of Resurrection. God showed them to me in one and the same place, on two different occasions (*fī ṣaᶜīd wāḥid fī zamānayn mukhtalifayn*)'.[3] Finally, in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* Ibn ᶜArabī gives two valuable pieces of information about the place and date of this vision: 'Know that when God showed to me and made me contemplate all the Messengers and prophets of the human species from Adam down to Muḥammad, in a scene (*mashhad*) in which it was granted to me to participate at Cordoba in 586, none of them

1. *Fut.*, III, p.323.
2. Hūd is one of the 27 prophets mentioned in the Qur'ān to whom the 27 chapters in the *Fuṣūṣ* correspond.
3. *Fut.*, IV, p.77.

spoke to me with the exception of Hūd, who explained to me the reason for their gathering'.[4]

What did Hūd tell him? A passage from the *Rūḥ al-quds* seems to provide an initial answer. During the course of his biographical sketch of Abū Muḥammad Makhlūf al-Qabā'ilī—a saint of Cordoba to whom he once took his father[5]—Ibn ᶜArabī relates that one evening after leaving the shaikh he had a vision in which he saw all the Messengers and prophets gathered together: 'Next I noticed a man who was tall, with a broad face, white hair and a large beard, and who had his hand on his cheek. I chose to address myself to him and ask him the reason for this gathering. He said to me: "They are all the prophets from Adam down to Muḥammad; not a single one of them is missing". I asked him: "And you? Which of them are you?" He replied: "I am Hūd, of the people of ᶜĀd". I said: "Why have you all come?" He answered: "We have come to visit Abū Muḥammad". On waking, I inquired about Abū Muḥammad Makhlūf [al-Qabā'ilī] and learned that on that very night he had fallen ill. He died a few days later'.[6]

From these various passages we are already in a position to draw some conclusions. Ibn ᶜArabī had not one but two visions at Cordoba. During the first one, in 586/1190, he witnessed the assembling of all the Messengers and prophets; during the second, which also occurred in Cordoba but at a different time, he saw 'all the believers', which therefore included all the prophets and all the saints. It was during this second vision that he discovered that every saint (*walī*) is 'on the foot of' (*ᶜalā qadam*) a prophet; so it was that he saw Shaikh ᶜUryabī 'on the foot of Jesus'.[7]

When the Elect of God assembled in Cordoba, what was their purpose in doing so? According to the incident described in the *Rūḥ*, it will have been to be present at the last moments of Shaikh al-Qabā'ilī. However there was also another reason, which Ibn ᶜArabī would seem not to have revealed anywhere in his written works but which he did confide to certain disciples of his who, from generation to generation, handed down to each other the secret of the Great Vision at Cordoba. Fortunately for us, some of them have left written testimonies. Thanks to the research conducted by specialists into Ibn ᶜArabī's school we are now in a position where we can trace this information back to a disciple of the second generation; but hopefully there is a very good chance

4. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, p.110.
5. This very probably means that Ibn ᶜArabī will have been in Cordoba as a companion to his father, who had no doubt been called to the city as part of his important duties in the Almohad government. The situation will have been similar to the one ten years earlier, when Ibn ᶜArabī's father had arranged the encounter between his son and Averroes.
6. *Rūḥ*, p.115; *Sufis of Andalusia*, § 20, p.124.
7. *Fut.*, III, p.208.

that, in the years to come, the editing and systematic study of the works written by Ibn ʿArabī's direct disciples[8] will make it possible to trace the line of transmission back even further.

For the time being it is Mu'ayyad al-Dīn Jandī (*d.* approx. 700H) who is the first to divulge this mystery, in a work that in fact happens to be a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*.[9] Jandī, as mentioned in the last chapter, was a disciple of Qūnawī, who in turn—as we will see later—was brought up from a very young age by the Shaikh al-Akbar himself. ʿAbd al-Razzāq Qāshānī (*d.* 730/1330), Jandī's disciple, and then Dāwūd Qayṣarī (*d.* 751/1350), a disciple of Qāshānī, repeat the same details in turn in their own commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ*:[10] The prophets and Messengers of God assembled in honour of Ibn ʿArabī to congratulate him on being nominated the 'Seal of Sainthood', the supreme heir to the Seal of the prophets.

*

What precisely is implied by the notion of a 'Seal of Sainthood' (*khatm* or *khatam al-walāya*)? What is the function of the Seal within the sphere of sainthood? We can now give very precise answers to these questions thanks to a recent work by an author who has not only analysed the references to the Seal in Sufi literature in general but has also succeeded specifically in extracting Ibn ʿArabī's own teaching on this matter from the enormous corpus of his writings and from the various expositions of the idea—sometimes contradictory and often ambiguous—that they contain.[11] This means there is no need to go over the groundwork again. However, the spiritual biography of Ibn ʿArabī is so intimately related to the issue of the Seal of Sainthood that there can be no tackling the one subject without also coming to grips with the other, and some presentation of the broad outlines of his teaching on the matter will be indispensable.

'I was prophet when Adam was still between water and mud.' For some saints this *ḥadīth*[12] is the prophet Muḥammad's affirmation of the pre-

8. This applies especially to the written works of one of his disciples elect, Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, which have still not been adequately studied. Professor William Chittick is at present preparing a major work on Qūnawī.

9. Jandī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, p.431.

10. Qāshānī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Cairo 1321H, p.130; Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, lithographed edition, Bombay 1300H, p.200.

11. Michel Chodkiewicz, *The Seal of the Saints*.

12. It is not included in this form in the canonical collections, and its authenticity was disputed by (among others) Ibn Taymiyya.

istence of the Muḥammadan Reality, the *ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya*. He had been, was, and will be. All the prophets who had been sent to men since the time of Adam are consequently just bearers or receptacles at a given moment in human history of a fragment of this Muḥammadan Reality, which never stopped travelling in this way through time and from man to man up until the moment of its total and perfect exteriorisation in the historical personality of the prophet Muḥammad. With his death the 'gate of legislative prophecy' (*nubuwwat al-tashrī*) was definitively closed; only 'sainthood' (*walāya*) remains, and it is therefore through it—or more precisely through the saints who realise it—that the Muḥammadan Reality will continue on its course until the end of time. What makes this even truer is the fact that, as we have seen, for Ibn ʿArabī every 'saint' (*walī*) is the heir (*wārith*) to one of the prophets, with the qualification that even when a saint inherits from another prophet apart from Muḥammad he none the less always receives his heritage indirectly from the Seal of prophets himself.

These ideas were to be attacked severely by a good number of jurists. But that is not all. Ibn ʿArabī went on to explain that sainthood encompasses the divine message (*risāla*) and prophecy (*nubuwwa*). Every prophet, or *nabī*, is consequently also a saint or *walī*, and in the person of each prophet the *walī* is superior to the *nabī*. In effect what he was saying is that the divine messages and prophecy have an end—which is marked by the death of the prophet Muḥammad—but that sainthood has no end either in this world or in the future life, as is proved by the designation of God as *al-Walī* in the Qur'ān (2:57). Furthermore, the distinction between 'sainthood' and 'prophecy' is a pretty tenuous one because according to Ibn ʿArabī the highest level of sainthood—the level of the 'solitary ones' (*afrād*)—has the title of *nubuwwa ʿāmma* or 'general prophecy' (as opposed to legislative prophecy).

Now just as there is a 'Seal of legislative prophecy' in the person of Muḥammad (Qur'ān 33:40), so there is a Seal of saints. This function is in fact divided according to Ibn ʿArabī's teaching between three separate individuals. The first, who is the Seal of Muḥammadan sainthood, seals the heritage of strictly Muḥammadan prophecy. At any given moment he is the manifestation of the integral, effective and unique realisation of Muḥammadan sainthood (*walāya muḥammadiyya*); in other words he is the externalisation of the prophet Muḥammad's name of *al-walī*, which had been partially eclipsed by his function of divine messenger (*rasūl*). In Ibn ʿArabī's words: 'Just as God sealed legislative prophecy through Muḥammad, so, through the Muḥammadan Seal He has sealed the sainthood which derives from the Muḥammadan legacy but not the sainthood which derives from the legacy of the other prophets. In fact there are saints who, for example, inherit from Abraham or Moses or Jesus; and there will continue to be saints of this kind

after the time of the Muḥammadan Seal, although there will no longer be any saints who are "on the heart of Muḥammad".'[13]

With the death of the Muḥammadan Seal none of the saints will any longer have direct access to the strictly Muḥammadan heritage, but the grade of 'general prophecy' will still remain open: in other words there will still be *afrād*. It will only be with the advent of the 'Seal of Universal Sainthood' that the gate of non-legislative prophecy will in turn be closed. Even after his coming there will still be saints, but from then on none of them will attain to the station of *afrād*.

Finally, with the third Seal sainthood will be definitively closed. Ibn ᶜArabī reveals that this third Seal will not just be the last of the saints: he will also be the last man to be born into this world. 'The last-born of the human species will be in the line of Seth and will possess his secrets. After him no more children will be born into the human race. He will be the Seal of Infants (*khatm al-awlād*). He will have a sister who will be born at the same time as him but will emerge from the womb before him, him after her. The head of this Seal will be placed near the feet of his sister. His place of birth will be China and his language will be the language of the people of that land. Sterility will spread among men and women and there will be a proliferation of marriages not followed by any births. He will call men to God and they will not reply to his call. After God takes away his soul and the souls of the believers of his time, those who survive him will be like beasts. They will pay no regard either to the lawfulness of what is licit or to the unlawfulness of what is illicit. Animal nature will be the only authority they obey; they will do nothing but follow their passions, free of all reason and every sacred Law. And it will be on them that the Hour will dawn.'[14] Nowhere in Ibn ᶜArabī's writings does this third Seal seem to be identified any more precisely, so all that remains is to determine the identity of the individuals invested with the functions of Muḥammadan Seal and of Seal of Universal Sainthood.

Regarding this second function, Ibn ᶜArabī is quite categorical: for him the Seal of Universal Sainthood is Jesus. 'There are in fact two Seals; through one of them God seals sainthood in general, through the other He seals Muḥammadan sainthood. As to the person who is the Seal of sainthood in an absolute sense, it is Jesus. He is the saint who in the time of this Community [i.e. the Islamic community] is the holder *par excellence* of this non-legislative prophetic function, because henceforth he is dissociated from the function of legislative prophet and Messenger (*rasūl*). When he descends at the end of time he will do so in the capacity of heir and Seal, and *after him there will be no further saint*

13. *Fut.*, II, p.49; *Seal of the Saints*, p.118.
14. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, p.67; *Seal of the Saints*, pp.125–26.

endowed with general prophecy . . .. As to the Seal of Universal Sainthood, after whom there will no longer be any saints [who attain to this level], this is therefore Jesus; we have met numerous saints who were "on the heart of Jesus" or of another of the Messengers.'[15]

Once again, it will be worth noting the major role that Ibn ᶜArabī ascribed to Jesus—not only in his personal destiny, as we have already seen, but also in his conception of sacred history. Certainly it is generally acknowledged and admitted in Islam that Jesus will descend to earth again at the end of time so as to introduce a reign of justice and peace by applying the Muḥammadan *sharīᶜa*;[16] and yet never before would he seem to have been given a specific function within the economy of sainthood, or *walāya*.

We are now in a better position to understand the exact nature of that special relationship between Ibn ᶜArabī and Jesus which has been referred to several times already: for if Jesus is the Seal of Universal Sainthood, Ibn ᶜArabī himself laid claim to the role of Muḥammadan Seal. Only a partial and extremely biased examination of his writings could possibly have incited certain authors to maintain that no formal declaration to this effect is to be found in his writings.[17] We have, for example, his statement that 'I am—without any doubt—the Seal of Sainthood, in my capacity as heir to the Hashimite and the Messiah'.[18] Again, in a poem from the *Dīwān* he declares:,

'I am the Seal of Saints, just as it is attested
That the Seal of the Prophets is Muḥammad:
The Seal in a specific sense, not the Seal of Sainthood in general,
For that is Jesus the Assisted'.[19]

The Muḥammadan Seal is the comprehensive and integral manifestation of the *walāya muḥammadiyya*, or Muḥammadan sainthood, which is the

15. *Fut.*, II, p.49; *Seal of the Saints*, pp.117–18. This frequently repeated assertion that Jesus is the Seal of Universal Sainthood provides grounds for doubting the ascription to Ibn ᶜArabī of an unpublished treatise called the *Bulghat al-ghawwāṣ* (R.G. § 91). Its themes and vocabulary bear the unmistakeable imprint of the Shaikh al-Akbar, and yet its author—in line with the Shi'ite commentators on Ibn ᶜArabī—assigns this particular function to the Mahdī. Cf. MS. Bibliothèque Nationale 2405, f° 325b.

16. According to Islamic tradition Jesus will redescend at the end of time, kill the *Dajjāl* (the Antichrist), smash the cross, kill all pigs and introduce the reign of justice and peace; he will be buried in Medina between Abū Bakr and ᶜUmar. Cf. Bukhārī, *maẓālim*, 31, *buyūᶜ*, 106, *anbiyā'*, 49; Tirmidhī, *fitan*, 54.

17. I am referring in particular to S. Ruspoli, who in an article in the *Cahiers de l'Herne* which is devoted to Henry Corbin (Paris 1981, p.232) states that Ibn ᶜArabī never made the claim that he was the Seal of the Saints.

18. *Fut.*, I, p.244.

19. *Dīwān*, p.293; cf. also pp.26, 50, 259, 334.

supreme source of every other form of sainthood. In this respect and from this point of view he is superior to all the prophets and Messengers, because it is from him that all the prophets derive their sainthood; even Jesus himself, as a *walī*, is under the authority of the Muḥammadan Seal. On the other hand, as a prophet and divine messenger Jesus is superior to the Seal of Muḥammadan Sainthood, who possesses neither of these functions. As Ibn ᶜArabī explains: 'Muḥammadan sainthood—that is, the sainthood which pertains specifically to the Law revealed by Muḥammad—has its own Seal, whose rank is inferior to the rank of Jesus because Jesus is a Messenger'.[20]

Elsewhere he writes as follows: 'When Jesus descends to earth at the end of time God will grant him the privilege to seal the Great Sainthood (*al-walāya al-kubrā*), which is the sainthood that begins with Adam and ends with the last of the prophets. This will be an honour for Muḥammad because universal sainthood—the sainthood of all communities—will only be sealed by a Messenger who follows his Law. Jesus will therefore seal the cycle of the Kingdom and universal sainthood simultaneously. This makes him one of the seals of this world. As for the Seal of Muḥammadan Sainthood, who is the Seal of the sainthood which pertains specifically to the community that is Muḥammad's in the mode of appearance, Jesus himself will be placed under the authority of his position—just as will Elijah, Khaḍir and every other saint of God belonging to that community. In other words, although Jesus is a Seal he will himself be sealed by the Muḥammadan Seal'.[21]

Although Ibn ᶜArabī was the first to expound this remarkable doctrine (al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī had already used the expression *khatm al-walāya*, but had been somewhat enigmatic about what it meant),[22] he was not alone in claiming the title of Muḥammadan Seal. There were others after him who ascribed this function to themselves.[23] Obviously it is not the historian's job to pass judgement one way or the other in such cases of rival claims. Here we are in the realm of the undemonstrable, and the very notion of a 'Seal' can only concern us to the extent that it represents a fact in the history of ideas

20. *Fut.*, I, p.185; *Seal of the Saints*, p.120.

21. *Fut.*, III, p.514; IV, p.195; *Seal of the Saints*, p.121.

22. Ḥakīm Tirmidhī, who died in approximately 285/898, was the author of the *Kitāb khatm al-awliyā'* or 'Book of the Seal of Saints', which has been edited by O. Yahia (Beirut 1965). Ibn ᶜArabī cites Tirmidhī on several occasions, and in a small unpublished treatise called the *Jawāb mustaqīm ᶜan mā sa'ala ᶜanhu al-Tirmidhī*, as well as more fully in chapter 73 of the *Futūḥāt*, he provides answers to the famous questionnaire in chapter 4 of Tirmidhī's work. Cf. *Seal of the Saints*, pp.27–32.

23. Cf. *Seal of the Saints*, pp.134–37, where the cases of Muḥammad Wafā, Aḥmad Sirhindī, Qushshāshī, Nābulusī and Aḥmad Tījānī are examined. All of these men either considered themselves or were considered by others to be the Seal of Saints—or even (in the case of Sirhindī) as possessing a function superior to that of the Seal.

and as such plays an important role in the subsequent evolution of Sufism. However, within the perspective of this book it is essential to point out that for Ibn ᶜArabī there is no possible room for doubt: he himself is the Supreme Seal, the source of all sainthood, and his spiritual journey as well as his teaching can only be properly understood in the light of this inner certainty which determined his life and his work. On plenty of occasions in this book we will be confronted with the various aspects of this issue. Here it is sufficient to bear in mind that for Ibn ᶜArabī the Cordoba vision marked the solemn acknowledgement by the Elect of God of his nomination as Seal of Muḥammadan Sainthood.

SEVILLE: RETREATS AND REVELATIONS

THE population of Seville was in turmoil. The new sultan, Abū Yūsuf Yaᶜqūb al-Manṣūr, had succeeded to his father who had been mortally wounded during the Almohad disaster at Santarém in 580/1184, and was now coming to the Andalusian capital firmly resolved to restore order to the tumultuous city.

With the third ruler of the Mu'minid dynasty, the Almohad state had reached its apogee. Manṣūr was a great lover of art and culture like his father, but in military leadership he demonstrated his superiority and succeeded where his father had failed. In 581/1185 he took back Bougie from the Banū Ghāniya, who had launched a huge Almoravid offensive in North Africa. In 583/1187 he crushed their army at the battle of Hamma and subdued the Arab tribes of Ifrīqiya who had rallied to the cause of the Almoravids. But his greatest victory of all was to be the bitter defeat he inflicted on the people of Castile at Alarcos in 591/1195.[24]

Manṣūr disembarked at Seville in Jumādā II, 586/1190. He carried out a general inspection of the administration, held an inquiry into the iniquities perpetrated by government officials and personally kept a watchful eye open to ensure that justice was respected. He also attempted the difficult task of applying to Seville the decrees he had enacted at Marrakech on ascending to the throne: absolute prohibition of the sale of alcohol[25] on pain of death, and the banning of singers and musicians from practising their professions. The musical instruments on the Guadalquivir fell silent—at least for a while.[26]

But there was also more. The new ruler was a fervent admirer of Ibn Ḥazm

24. On the battles fought by Abū Yaᶜqūb al-Manṣūr cf. *Historia del imperio almohade*, chapter 6.

25. See Lévi-Provençal, *Trente-sept Lettres*, pp.164–67.

26. *Sevilla islámica*, p.166.

and did not believe in the Imāmate of Ibn Tumart;[27] he adopted Ẓāhirite ritual and declared war on the Mālikites. According to the author of the *Muᶜjib* he forbade the teaching of manuals of applied jurisprudence and ordered the *auto-da-fé* of a large number of Mālikite works such as the *Mudawwana* by Saḥnūn (*d.* 240/854). From this time onwards jurists were obliged to adhere strictly and solely to the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*.[28] Simultaneously he gave instructions to the *muḥaddithūn*, or transmitters of the prophetic traditions, to begin compiling the 'ten works' (*al-muṣannafāt al-ᶜashara*)—in other words the ten collections of *ḥadīth* which were accepted as canonical. These collections were soon to become disseminated throughout the Maghreb.[29]

Manṣūr's religious rigorism became increasingly pronounced from year to year; at the end of his life he issued a law compelling Jews to wear distinctive clothing.[30] That was to be one of the last measures he took. The sultan was tired, eaten up with remorse at having had his brother and uncle killed in 583/1187 for attempting to overthrow him; from 594/1197 onwards he relinquished fulfilling his public function more and more, and gave himself to asceticism and works of piety instead.[31]

It was during this period, in 594/1197, that he had Abū Madyan summoned to the palace at Marrakech. What exactly did he want from him? We will never know, because the saint died *en route* and was buried at ᶜUbbād, not far from Tlemcen. This request on the part of the sultan has been variously interpreted. According to G. Marçais and Asín Palacios, Manṣūr summoned Abū Madyan because he was disturbed by his increasing popularity.[32] There would therefore be something of an analogy between the case of Abū Madyan, identified as a potential rebel, and the case of other unruly Sufis such as Ibn Barrajān or Ibn Qasī: he would have been taken to Marrakech as a prisoner to be tried. But this is not a very plausible hypothesis. By this time Manṣūr had already withdrawn from the exercise of power, entrusting it to his family instead; and besides, nothing entitles us to suppose

27. Manṣūr was in fact the first Almohad ruler to doubt the authenticity of Ibn Tumart's mission as Mahdī. Cf. *Muᶜjib*, p.212 (where Marrākushī reports an incident when Manṣūr poured scorn on those who believed in Ibn Tumart's Imāmate); also R. le Tourneau, 'Sur la disparition de la doctrine almohade', *Studia islamica* 32, Paris 1970, pp.193–201, where he publishes the text of the official declaration by Sultan al-Ma'mūn, Manṣūr's son, abrogating the Almohad doctrine.

28. *Muᶜjib*, pp.201–3.

29. Ibid., p.202.

30. Ibid., p.223; Ibn ᶜIdhārī, *Bayān*, III, p.205.

31. *Bayān*, III, p.210; *Historia del imperio almohade*, pp.381ff.

32. G. Marçais, *Abū Madyan*, in *EI*² ; Asín Palacios, 'Shadhilies y alumbrados', *Al-Andalus* 10.1, 1945, p.7.

that Abū Madyan could have represented—or even appeared to represent—a threat to the power of the Almohads.

There is also another version of the events which seems more satisfactory because it corresponds more closely to what we know about the sultan's state of mind towards the end of his reign. According to the author of the *Risālā*—Ibn Abī Manṣūr (*d.* 682/1283)—Manṣūr made the decision at the end of his life to enter the Path and revealed his wish to a saintly woman in Marrakech; she in turn advised him to speak to Abū Madyan. When the saint came to hear of the sultan's wish he apparently exclaimed: 'In obeying him I am obeying God, Glory to Him! And yet I will not reach him but will die at Tlemcen.' Ibn Abī Manṣūr goes on to explain how when Abū Madyan arrived in the town of Tlemcen he said to the sultan's envoys who were escorting him: ' "Salute your master and tell him he will find healing at the hands of Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-Marīnī". So it was that our master Abū Madyan died, in Tlemcen.'[33] This Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-Marīnī was none other than Abū l-ᶜAbbās Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Mariyyī al-Qanjā'irī: an Andalusian Sufi from (as his name suggests) the region of Almeria who according to Ibn ᶜAbd al-Malik was the 'shaikh of the entire Sufi community in the Maghreb'. He went to the East on four occasions, and crossed paths with Ibn ᶜArabī in Hebron in Shawwāl 602/1205.[34] All his biographers emphasise the respect and veneration shown to him by the Almohad rulers; in this connection Ibn ᶜAbd al-Malik's detailed sketch of him contains a story about the alms that the Almohad sultan entrusted to him for distributing to the poor in Medina. Also, according to Ibn Ṣāhib al-Ṣalāt it was Mariyyī who in 592/1195 persuaded Manṣūr to renovate the great mosque of Ibn ᶜAddabās.[35]

From a passage in the *Rūḥ* it would appear that Manṣūr was also on very good terms with Yūsuf al-Shubarbulī, a disciple of Ibn Mujāhid.[36] Further, we will see in due course that the time came when he offered assistance to Ibn ᶜArabī himself. But this was during a period when the Shaikh al-Akbar was resolutely avoiding all association with men of power—and indeed had for some time been avoiding associating with men in general.

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33. Ibn Abī Manṣūr Ṣafī al-Dīn, *Risāla*, p.151. It is interesting to note that in his *Muḥāḍarat al-abrār* (II, p.92) Ibn ᶜArabī describes an incident in which the sultan of the time (he is not any more specific) yielded to the wishes of Abū Madyan.

34. *Kitāb al-yaqīn*, ms. Yahya Efendi, 2415, ff^{os} 124b–125.

35. *al-Mann*, II, p.486 and, for the story about the alms, Ibn ᶜAbd al-Malik, *al-Dhayl*, I, pp.46–58. Cf. also *Takmila*, ed. Bencheneb, § 296; *Muᶜjib*, p.212; ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb b. Manṣūr, *Aᶜlām al-maghrib*, Rabat 1986, IV, pp.75–81. The same story occurs in Ibn Abī Manṣūr's *Risāla* where it is attributed to 'Marīnī'.

36. Cf. e.g. sketches 6, 16, 26 and 56 in the *Rūḥ*.

'The Messenger of God has said: "Demand accounts of yourself before they are demanded of you". With regard to this matter God revealed to me a sublime spectacle (*mashhad ᶜaẓīm*), at Seville in 586.'[37] Ibn ᶜArabī says no more; but clearly he is referring to a vision relating to the Last Judgement. Now it so happens that several autobiographical accounts survive in which he mentions the various supernatural perceptions he was granted by way of anticipation of the Resurrection and Last Judgement. The analogies between these accounts are no justification for mixing them up: each of the visions describes one particular aspect either of the universal Resurrection or of Ibn ᶜArabī's own resurrection. In any case two of these texts cannot possibly bear any relation to the 'sublime spectacle' of 586, because they refer to visions which he experienced in the one case in Fez in 593 and in the other case in 599 at Mecca. However, we also possess two other accounts by Ibn ᶜArabī which mention neither dates nor place-names but which quite possibly correspond to the vision of 586.

The first of these accounts is to be found in chapter 71 of the *Futūḥāt*—a chapter devoted to the 'secrets of fasting'. After explaining that on the Day of Judgement the saints will first of all intercede on behalf of those who have done them harm (he notes that in the case of those who show kindness to the saints, their benevolence will itself be their safe-conduct), Ibn ᶜArabī describes the vision he was granted of his own intercession. 'God has promised me that on the Day of Resurrection I will be able to intercede on behalf of everyone who falls within my gaze—*those whom I know and those whom I do not know.* He showed me this in a scene (*mashhad*) in such a way that I saw it and experienced it with certainty.'[38]

In the *Kitāb al-mubashshirāt* or 'Book of Visions' Ibn ᶜArabī gives a complete and detailed report of the event. 'I saw in a vision that the Resurrection had taken place. People were rushing forward: some were clothed, others naked; some were walking on their legs, others on their faces.

'Then God came, "in the darkness of thick clouds, accompanied by angels" (Qur'ān 2:210), seated on His Throne which was being carried by angels. They placed the throne to my right. While all this was happening I experienced no fear or anxiety or fright.

'Then God placed His palm upon me to make me know what my situation had been [in this low world]; thanks to the authentic *ḥadīth* (*al-ḥadīth al-ṣaḥīḥ*) I understood his intention[39] and I said to Him: "Lord, kings demand

37. *Fut.*, IV, p.476.

38. *Fut.*, I, p.617.

39. No doubt the allusion here is to the incident in the Prophet's *miᶜrāj* or 'spiritual ascent' when he felt the 'fingers of God' on his shoulder. Cf. Ibn Ḥanbal, V, p.243.

accounts of their subjects because they are poor and need what they take from them for their treasury. But You are rich. Tell me then what You will add to Your purse by demanding accounts of created beings". He smiled and replied: "What do you want?" I answered: "Authorise me to go to Paradise [i.e. directly and without rendering accounts]". He gave me His authorisation.

'Then I saw my sister Umm Saᶜd. I said to Him: "And my sister Umm Saᶜd!" He replied: "Take her with you". Then I saw my sister Umm ᶜAlā'. I said to Him: "And her as well?" He replied: "Her as well!" I said to Him: "And my wife Umm ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān!" He replied: "And your wife Umm ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān". I said to Him: "And Khātūn Umm Jūnān!" He replied: "And Khātūn Umm Jūnān!" I said to Him: "This is taking too much time: let me take all my companions and relatives whom I know, as well as everyone else whom You wish". He answered: "Even if you were to ask me if you could take all the people of the Station (*ahl al-mawqif*),[40] I would let you".

'I then remembered the intercession of the angels and prophets and, out of respect for them, I [only] took with me everyone who fell within my gaze (God alone can count them): *those whom I knew and those whom I did not know.* I made them go in front of me, keeping behind them so as to prevent them becoming lost on the way.'[41]

The two accounts coincide: in both cases it is a question of Ibn ᶜArabī interceding on behalf of 'everyone who fell within his gaze, those whom he knew and those whom he did not know'. But are we to identify the description contained in these two texts with the vision of the 'sublime spectacle' that he experienced in Seville in 586H? One small detail in the names referred to—the name of Umm Jūnān—would seem to suggest we must answer this question in the negative. We know absolutely nothing about this woman apart from the fact that she was so close to Ibn ᶜArabī that he specifically interceded on her behalf. But her name and aristocratic title, *khātūn*, which was a title applied chiefly to the wives of Seljuq and Ayyūbid rulers, suggest she was Turkish or Kurdish in origin, and this makes it unlikely that Ibn ᶜArabī could have known her in Andalusia.

But there is one particular feature of this account that merits closer consideration. This is the fact that the first four individuals whom the Shaikh al-Akbar asked to be able to take with him to Paradise are all women. The *Kitāb al-kutub* contains a long letter written by Ibn ᶜArabī to Umm Saᶜd to

40. This is a reference to a *ḥadīth* which does not seem to be included in any of the canonical collections but which Ibn ᶜArabī cites at length, together with its *isnād*, in *Fut.*, I, p.309 and in *Muḥāḍarat*, II, pp.186ff. According to it, at the Last Judgement man will have to travel the length of fifty *mawāqif* ('halts'). We will come back to this *ḥadīth* in a later chapter.

41. *Kitāb al-mubashshirāt*, MS. Fatih 5322, f° 93a; MS. Bayazid 1686, f° 62b.

console her over the death of Umm ʿAlā',[42] and from this document it emerges that he was very attached to his two sisters (it will be remembered that he had no brothers) whom he took with him to Fez after his father's death with the aim of marrying them off.[43] The two other women referred to in the passage remain an enigma. Of Umm Jūnān we know absolutely nothing—not even the nature of her relationship to Ibn ʿArabī. As we have seen, Umm ʿAbd al-Raḥmān was the name of one of his wives—but which one? Various references in the *Futūḥāt* indicate that he had at least two wives. It would appear that his first wife was Maryam bint Muḥammad b. ʿAbdūn al-Bijā'ī; he possibly married her in Seville,[44] and her spiritual aspirations were very much in harmony with his own—as the following passage shows. 'My saintly wife Maryam bint M. b. ʿAbdūn al-Bijā'ī said to me: "In my sleep I saw someone who often comes to visit me in my visions, but whom I have never met in the world of sense-perception. He asked me: 'Do you aspire to the Way?' I replied: 'Most certainly yes, but I don't know how to reach it!' He said: 'Through five things, namely trust (*al-tawakkul*), certainty (*al-yaqīn*), patience (*al-ṣabr*), resolution (*al-ʿazīma*) and sincerity (*al-ṣidq*)' ".'[45]

The second of Ibn ʿArabī's wives whom we know about was Fāṭima bint Yūnus b. Yūsuf Amīr al-Ḥaramayn. She gave him a son, Muḥammad ʿImād al-Dīn (*d.* 667H), to whom he bequeathed as an endowment (*waqf*) the first draft of the *Futūḥāt*.[46] But here things become complicated. Ibn ʿArabī also had a second son, Muḥammad Saʿd al-Dīn (*d.* 656H), who was born in Malatya in 618H and apparently from another wife.[47] Could it be that the mother of this Muḥammad was the same as Qūnawī's mother—that is, the woman who according to some sources became Ibn ʿArabī's wife in Anatolia? Also, according to some late sources, after he had settled in Syria Ibn ʿArabī married the daughter of the 'Mālikite *qāḍī*' of Damascus.[48] No doubt the

42. *Kitāb al-kutub*, pp.35–40, in *Rasā'il*, Hyderabad 1948.

43. *Durra*, § 3, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.75.

44. See above, chapter 2, where it was pointed out that Asín Palacios' categorical assertion to this effect needs strong qualification.

45. *Fut.*, I, p.278; cf. also *Fut.*, III, p.235. Thanks to a *samāʿ* dated to 630H in Aleppo, we happen to know that she was still alive and by her husband's side in that year. The *samāʿ* in question is to be found at the end of the *Kitāb naẓm al-futūḥ al-makkī*, in MS. Aḥmadiyya, Aleppo, 774; Riyāḍ al-Māliḥ was kind enough to provide me with information about this manuscript.

46. *Fut.*, IV, p.554: '... the first draft, which I bequeathed as an endowment to my son Muḥammad the elder [Muḥammad al-kabīr = M.ʿImād al-Dīn], whose mother is Fāṭima bint Yūnus b. Yūsuf Amīr al-Ḥaramayn ...'. In specifying the name of Muḥammad's mother Ibn ʿArabī seems to have wanted to avoid any possible confusion between him and Muḥammad the younger, who was his son by another wife.

47. *Nafḥ*, II, p.170.

48. *Nafḥ*, II, p.179; *Manāqib Ibn ʿArabī*, p.30.

reference here is to Zayn al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Salām al-Zawāwī (*d.* 681H),[49] the first Mālikite *qāḍī* of Damascus, who came from a great Berber family of jurists which had settled close to Bougie; a member of this family had been one of Ibn ʿArabī's teachers during his stay in that town.[50] And finally, according to Muḥammad Banū Zakī's *Tuḥfat al-zā'ir*[51] Ibn ʿArabī married a daughter of the Banū Zakī, who for a long time occupied the position of *qāḍī* in Syria; some corroboration of this can perhaps be derived from a reference in the *Dīwān*, where Ibn ʿArabī states that he had invested the daughter of Zakī al-Dīn with the *khirqa*.[52]

Which of these women is Umm ʿAbd al-Raḥmān? In the present state of our knowledge it is impossible to give an answer. However, it is worth noting that only two sons are ever referred to either by Ibn ʿArabī himself in the *samāʿs* of his writings or by later chroniclers: Muḥammad ʿImād al-Dīn and Muḥammad Saʿd al-Dīn. This naturally leads one to suppose that if Ibn ʿArabī ever had a son called ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, he must have died at a very young age.

Whatever the nature of the bonds of kinship and affection which linked Ibn ʿArabī with these four people, one fact is particularly striking—namely that the first beneficiaries of his intercession with God were all women. Indeed here too he distinguishes himself from the majority of his co-religionists, because for him there was not one single level of spiritual realisation which women are incapable of attaining. 'Men and women have their share in every level, including the function of Pole (*quṭb*)'.[53]

Furthermore, several of Ibn ʿArabī's spiritual teachers were women; they include two whose company he used to frequent in Seville when still a youth—Fāṭima bint Ibn al-Muthannā and Shams Umm al-Fuqarā'.

Fāṭima bint Ibn al-Muthannā often used to tell her young disciple: 'I am your spiritual mother and the light of your carnal mother'.[54] Although this lady of Seville was over ninety years old, her face was so pink and fresh that Ibn ʿArabī would blush whenever he saw her. She lived in extreme poverty, feeding herself from the waste that the people of Seville left outside their doors. She appears not to have had any home of her own until the day when Ibn ʿArabī and two other disciples of hers built her a hut out of reeds. In his *Rūḥ al-quds* he has no hesitation in stating that 'she was a mercy for the worlds', and he states that she had at her command an extremely unusual

49. Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, Beirut 1974, pp.235–36.

50. *Rūḥ*, § 42, p.124; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.137; *Fut.*, II, pp.21, 637. In chapter 10 we will come back to the question as to the likelihood of this marriage.

51. *Tuḥfat al-zā'ir*, Damascus 1964, p.597.

52. *Dīwān*, p.56.

53. *Fut.*, III, p.89.

54. *Fut.*, II, p.348.

but totally devoted servant: the sūra *al-Fātiḥa*, who—just like Aladdin's genie of the lamp—fulfilled even the smallest of her wishes.[55]

It was apparently in 586/1190,[56] at Marchena of the Olives which was a citadel not far from Seville, that Ibn ᶜArabī met Shams Umm al-Fuqarā'. As he himself writes in the *Rūḥ al-quds*, 'She had a stout heart, noble spiritual energy and great discrimination. She concealed her spiritual state, but sometimes she would reveal an aspect of it to me in secret because she had been granted a revelation about me, and this would give me great joy'.[57]

During the same year, 586, Ibn ᶜArabī became acquainted with some saints who fell within a rather peculiar spiritual category: the 'demented' (*bahālīl*). In a chapter of the *Futūḥāt* which is devoted specifically to them,[58] he explains that the 'demented' have lost their reason as the result of a theophany and a sudden seizure which comes from God. 'Their reason remains with Him (*ᶜuqūluhum maḥbūsa ᶜindahu*), rejoicing in the contemplation of Him, plunged into His Presence, overcome by His Majesty. They are reasonable men but without any reason! (*hum aṣḥāb ᶜuqūl bi-lā ᶜuqūl*).' A little further on he explains that there are three types of 'demented'. There are those in whom the inspiration which visits them (*wārida*) is more powerful than their own inner strength, and they are accordingly dominated by their spiritual state. There are those whose inspiration is equal in strength to their own inner strength: in their case their outward behaviour is apparently quite normal, but they are suddenly distracted when the inspiration seizes them. Finally there are those whose interior strength is greater than the strength of the inspiration; they do not show anything when seized by the inspiration. There are in addition two separate kinds of 'demented': the 'sad demented' (*maḥzūn*) and the 'joyful demented' (*masrūr*). ᶜAlī al-Salāwī[59] and Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Ghilyārī,[60] whom Ibn ᶜArabī met in Seville in 586H, both belonged to the second category. On the other hand Yūsuf al-Mughāwir (*d.* 619/1222), whose company he also frequented in Seville during the same year, was one of those who weep without ceasing.[61]

Ibn ᶜArabī was all the better equipped to describe the station of the *bahālīl* or

55. For Fāṭima bint Ibn al-Muthannā cf. *Fut.*, I, p.274; II, pp.135, 347, 621; *Rūḥ*, § 55, p.126; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.143–47.

56. O.Yahia, *Histoire et classification*, p.94.

57. *Rūḥ*, § 54, p.126; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.142–43.

58. *Fut.*, I, pp.248–50.

59. Ibn ᶜArabī says he never stopped laughing, not even during prayers: cf. *Fut.*, I, pp.250, 356; II, p.187.

60. He came to visit Ibn ᶜArabī in Seville in 586: cf. *Fut.*, I, p.250; II, p.167.

61. Ibn ᶜArabī specifies that he met Yūsuf al-Mughāwir in Seville in 586, and that he was his companion at the same time as Salāwī's. Cf. *Fut.*, II, pp.33, 187; Ṣafī al-Dīn, *Risāla*, pp.135–40 and the bio-bibliographical sketch on p.216.

'demented' because he himself had experienced it at a certain period in his life. 'I myself have experienced this station (*maqām*). For a time, according to what people have told me, I performed the five prayers and directed them as imām. I carried out the bowings and prostrations and all the prayer rituals—the gestures as well as the recitations—without seeing anything myself. I had no awareness of those who were with me, or of the place, or of what was happening or of anything else in the sense-perceived world. This was due to a state of contemplation which dominated me and in which I was annihilated both to myself and to everything else. They told me that when the time for prayer arrived I recited the call to prayer and directed the prayer itself. I was like someone asleep who gesticulates [in his sleep] without being aware of it.'[62]

It was during this same period that he established a bond of friendship with the *khaṭīb* of Marchena, ᶜAbd al-Majīd b. Salama, who told him of his fabulous encounter with Muᶜādh b. al-Ashraf, one of the 'substitutes' (*abdāl*) of his time.[63] As for Ibn ᶜArabī himself, there was nothing more natural than that he should see one of these mysterious individuals suddenly appear right in the middle of his house. That is precisely what happened to him in the same year, 586, in Seville. One evening, after performing the prayer at sunset he suddenly experienced a burning desire to meet the man who from this time onwards he was to consider his master: Abū Madyan. There was a knock at the door, and it was Abū ᶜImrān Mūsā al-Ṣadrānī, a companion of Abū Madyan and himself one of the seven 'substitutes' who—after the four Pillars—represent one of the highest levels of the initiatic hierarchy. Ibn ᶜArabī asked him: ' "Where have you come from?" Mūsā replied: "From Shaikh Abū Madyan in Bougie". "And when were you with him?" "I performed the sunset prayer with him, just now. After finishing the prayer he turned to me and said: 'Muḥammad b. ᶜArabī is now thinking such-and-such a thought, in Seville. Go to see him straight away and give him such-and-such a message from me'." He then described the desire I had had to meet Abū Madyan and told me that the shaikh had said: "Inform him that as far as our meeting in the spirit is concerned, that will certainly take place. But as to our corporeal meeting in this world, God will not permit it . . ." '.[64]

Their encounter 'in the spirit' did indeed take place: there would appear to be good justification for equating it with the dialogue quoted earlier between Ibn ᶜArabī and the Imām of the Left, which took place in the 'Intermediary World' or *barzakh* and during the course of which the Imām of the Left announced to Ibn ᶜArabī 'good tidings regarding his state'. This dialogue is

62. *Fut.*, I, p.250.

63. *Durra*, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.151; *Fut.*, I, p.277; II, p.7.

64. *Rūḥ*, § 19, p.114; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.121.

most probably to be dated to the same year (586), shortly before the Cordoba vision.

It is important to note that so far the majority of the spiritual teachers whose company Ibn ᶜArabī kept—for example Mīrtūlī, Ibn Qassūm, Shubarbulī—were affiliated with the Andalusian schools of Ibn al-ᶜArīf and Ibn al-Mujāhid, and that the teaching of these masters clearly bears the mark of this affiliation. But it is perhaps no coincidence that in this same year, 586, Muḥyī l-Dīn appears to have come under the spiritual supervision of Abū Madyan through the intermediary of several of his disciples. So, for example, he performed a month-long retreat in Seville with Abū Aḥmad al-Salāwī, who was a long-standing companion of Abū Madyan. 'He came to Seville when I was under the charge of my shaikh Yaᶜqūb al-Kūmī. The spiritual state of this man Abū Aḥmad was powerful. He had been the companion of Abū Madyan for eighteen years; his ascetic and devotional practice was intense, and he would weep abundantly. I spent a whole month with him at the mosque of Ibn Jarrād.'[65]

Shaikh Abū Yaᶜqūb Yūsuf al-Kūmī, whom Ibn ᶜArabī also refers to in this passage and whom he also knew in 586H, was another disciple of Abū Madyan. He was doubtless the first of Ibn ᶜArabī's masters to transmit to him the teaching of the great saint of the Maghreb, whose miracles and virtues he loved to speak of in Seville for hours on end.

Muḥyī l-Dīn's relationship with al-Kūmī was rather strange. The various different anecdotes in the *Rūḥ* that contain references to him reveal the profundity of Ibn ᶜArabī's veneration for the man. The love he felt for him was so sincere that, as he tells us, he was able to make him appear at any time of the day or night that he wanted to talk with him.[66] But more often than not he experienced a reverential fear in his presence which paralysed him completely. He confesses in the *Rūḥ*: 'When I stood in front of him—or any other of my teachers—I would start trembling like a leaf in the wind; my voice would change and my limbs would start knocking together. When he noticed this he would show kindness towards me and make a special effort to help me relax, but that only served to increase the fear and veneration he inspired in me'.[67]

And yet Ibn ᶜArabī specifically states elsewhere that in certain respects he was Kūmī's teacher. In the *Futūḥāt* he explains that, when a disciple dies before completing his *sulūk* or 'faring of the way', it is the shaikh's responsibility to ensure he completes it posthumously. 'That was the opinion

65. *Rūḥ*, § 24, p.117; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.127.
66. *Rūḥ*, § 2, p.81; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.72.
67. *Rūḥ*, p.80; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.70.

of my master Abū Yaᶜqūb Yūsuf al-Kūmī. He is the only one of my teachers who trained me in initiatic discipline (*riyāḍa*); he helped me in initiatic discipline while I helped him in the states of ecstasy (*mawājīd*). He was for me simultaneously master and disciple, and I was the same to him. People were astonished and nobody understood the reason. This happened in 586; in my case illumination (*fatḥ*) had preceded discipline (*riyāḍa*).'[68]

In reality it would seem that from a certain point of view all of Ibn ᶜArabī's spiritual teachers were his disciples. The reason for this has already been touched on: it has to do with the fact that his relationship to them was on two different levels—the level of disciple (*murīd*) and the level of gnostic (ᶜ*ārif*). The following incident provides a good illustration of the kind of spiritual benefit which he could bring them. To cite his own words: 'There was a time when I became accustomed to withdraw into cemeteries to isolate myself. I heard that my master Yūsuf b. Yakhlaf al-Kūmī had announced: "So-and-so [and he referred to me by name] has given up the company of the living because he prefers the company of the dead!" I sent someone to tell him: "If you join me you will soon see whose company I keep!" He performed the dawn prayer and came out alone to meet me; he searched for me and found me sitting between the tombs with my head lowered, talking with the spirits who kept me company. He came and sat beside me, full of respect. I turned towards him to look at him and saw that he had changed colour and seemed ill at ease. He was unable to raise his head because of the weight that was pressing down on him; I looked straight at him but he was unable to look at me because he was so disturbed. When I had finished my conversations and the 'spiritual instant' (*wārid*) had come to an end, the shaikh relaxed and, relieved, turned to me and kissed me between the eyes. I said to him: "Well, master, who is it who keeps company with the dead—you—or I?" He replied: "Certainly not, by God; it is I who keep company with the dead!"'[69]

Not only the dead spoke with Ibn ᶜArabī during his solitary retreats. So too did God. As he explains: 'The descent of the Qur'ān into the heart of the servant is the descent of God into him; God then speaks to him "from him and in him" (*min sirrihi fī sirrihi*)'.[70] This is precisely what happened to him on several occasions. In a Seville cemetery to which he was accustomed to withdraw (this was also in 586) he 'received' a number of Qur'ānic verses.[71] Clearly this is a reference to the descent of the Qur'ān 'in a shower of stars' (*nujūman*), which it is possible for saints to experience in the same way that the prophet Muḥammad had before them. According to Ibn ᶜArabī, Muḥammad received revelation in three different modes. Firstly he received

68. *Fut.*, I, p.616.
69. *Fut.*, III, p.45.
70. *Fut.*, III, p.94.
71. *Fut.*, IV, pp.156, 162.

the Book in its aspect of *furqān* during the Night of Destiny (*laylat al-qadr*); secondly he received it as *qur'ān* throughout the month of Ramaḍān; and finally he received it progressively over a period of twenty-four years in a shower of stars (*nujūman*). It is this 'starry' descent of the Qur'ān—a direct perception of the original Revelation, not to be confused with its methodical memorisation—which was experienced by the saints. So, for example, it is said that Abū Yazīd Biṣṭāmī 'did not die before he had "retained" the entire Qur'ān' (*mā māta ḥattā istaẓhara al-qur'ān*)—a statement which is not to be interpreted literally, because knowing the Qur'ān by heart is something much too commonplace to deserve being mentioned in the case of such an important person. In a section of the *Kitāb al-isfār* devoted to the 'Journey of the Qur'ān', Ibn ᶜArabī declares that he had experienced this 'starry' descent in his early stages. He further adds that in fact 'the Qur'ān never stops travelling towards the heart of those who preserve it'.[72]

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Visions, retreats, revelations: for Ibn ᶜArabī 586 was plainly a year full of blessings. One other piece of information perhaps needs to be added to the evidence adduced so far. This can be found in a passage in Jandī's *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*:[73] there, basing himself on the testimony of his teacher Qūnawī, Jandī asserts that it was at the end of a nine-month retreat in Seville that Ibn ᶜArabī was told he was the Muḥammadan Seal, the supreme Heir. There is no reason to doubt that the retreat in question took place in 586H—a year when Muḥyī l-Dīn increased the number of his retreats and frequented the cemeteries of Seville assiduously. As to how we are to reconcile this testimony with the interpretation given by the same author of the Cordoba vision, that is a problem we will have to come back to. The matter is complicated even further by a number of other, subsequent visions which also have a bearing on Ibn ᶜArabī's claim to the title of Seal of Muḥammadan Sainthood, because each of these would seem to offer grounds for assigning a different date to his investiture.

72. *Kitāb al-isfār ᶜan natā'ij al-asfār*, p.16, in *Rasā'il*.
73. *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, p.109.

4. Ibn ᶜArabī & the Savants of Andalusia

It is not only difficult but impossible to map out Ibn ᶜArabī's destiny with any real precision, and even more impossible to verify the legitimacy of his claims in matters of *walāya*, or sainthood. But it is a somewhat easier task—and indeed a very necessary one—to situate this destiny in the context of the society in which he lived and to determine the nature of his position amongst his contemporaries. This means in particular determining his relationship with regard to the various intellectual and religious circles of the Islamic West, which is where his vocation asserted itself and also where he spent almost half of his life.

Everyone who either has been or at present is involved in research into Islamic Spain in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries—regardless of the particular field of research involved (history, literature or religion)—inevitably comes to one and the same conclusion: in spite of the plethora of events that happened during the period, and in spite of the fact that it played such a decisive role in the history of Islam in the West, the Almohad era badly lacks a comprehensive study. Between, on the one hand, the work done by E. Lévi-Provençal on Islamic Spain from the time of the conquest down to the fall of the Cordoba caliphate (422/1031) and, on the other, R. Arié's studies of Spain under the Nasrids we are faced with a gaping void. As Dominique Urvoy has pointed out with regard to the social system of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, 'we possess no comprehensive study of al-Andalus for this period. We possess no—or at any rate very few—archival documents to help us reconstruct it. The chronicles provide the only material available to us, but they just deal with factual history'.[1] In practice this means that if we want to reconstruct even a small part of the intellectual and religious context

1. D. Urvoy, *Le Monde des Ulémas andalous*, p.3.

of the Almohad period we are obliged to turn to the *ṭabaqāt*, or biographical collections. These are a literary genre in which the Arabs are past masters: they are compilations—sometimes in alphabetical order, sometimes according to date of death—of biographical sketches of *ʿulamā'* or 'savants', in the broadest sense of this term. Regardless of who their author happens to be, these sketches are presented in a virtually uniform fashion and could hardly be more insipid or boring: names (father's name, grandfather's, surname, *kunya*), town of birth, teachers, disciples, travels, type of training and discipline, date of death. However, in *Le Monde des Ulémas andalous* Urvoy has shown that a meticulous examination and systematic analysis of the sketches contained in these *ṭabaqāt* does yield data which can help to clarify matters for anyone concerned with the social, religious and intellectual life of the period. By carrying out an analysis of this type in the case of the *Ṣila* by Ibn Bashkuwāl (*d.* 578/1183) and the *Takmila* of Ibn al-Abbār (*d.* 658/1259), Urvoy himself has come up with statistics which reveal some of the characteristic features of cultural and religious activity during the period when Ibn ʿArabī was living in the Islamic West, and from these data certain significant conclusions can be drawn.

To begin with, one notes that between 585 and 610 the census shows a considerable increase in the number of *ʿulamā'* in Seville: 100, or 68 up on the preceding period (565–85) and far larger than the number registered in Cordoba.[2] There is a similar increase in the region of the Maghreb.[3] Secondly, it appears that during this same period the traditional religious disciplines (*ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, Qur'ān) made a major leap forward throughout the Almohad realm. For *ḥadīth* the number swells from 57 names to 78; for *fiqh*, from 76 to 88, and for the Qur'ān from 97 to 126; there is also a substantial increase in *adab*, language and *kalām*.[4] It is also to be noted that this rapid advance in the traditional and literary disciplines is more accentuated in Seville than elsewhere in Andalusia.[5] And finally, when one examines the interrelationship between the various religious and literary disciplines one finds that *ḥadīth* was practised by almost a quarter of the jurists (*fuqahā'*), and became more and more closely linked with asceticism (*zuhd*) and Sufism; jurisprudence (*fiqh*) was intimately associated with literary disciplines, and the Qur'ān with study of Arabic (which is quite normal).[6] This all goes to show, firstly that Seville's efforts to supplant her rival Cordoba had finally succeeded, and secondly that Almoravid and Almohad Islam had broken with Andalusian tradition and re-allied itself with the tradition of the East.[7] One other fact which emerges is that although Mālikism held the majority

2. Ibid., p.139.
3. Ibid., p.140.
4. Ibid., p.141.
5. Ibid., p.153.
6. Ibid., pp.143–6.
7. Ibid., p.142.

position, it was not the only *madhhab* or 'school' in existence in Andalusia. Under the Almohads there was a slight increase in Shāfiʿism, and Ẓāhirism also continued to thrive.[8]

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Ibn ʿArabī's dogmatic and intellectual training began, as we have seen, in Seville in 578, and this means it coincided with the renewal of the religious and literary disciplines—especially Qur'ānic learning. To what extent did he benefit from this revival? What if anything did he gain from the teaching of the great savants or *ʿulamā'* of his time? What was his relationship with the religious dignitaries—the *qāḍīs* and *khaṭībs*? One possible way of arriving at answers to these questions is to examine the *Ijāza* he wrote to King Muẓaffar plus the chains of transmission given at the start of the *Muḥāḍarat al-abrār*, and then to complete these sources of information with the various pieces of data scattered throughout the body of his work. But first of all there are a few points regarding these sources which require a little clarification.

Several passages in the *Kitāb muḥāḍarat al-abrār* contain allusions to events and people dating from a period considerably later than Ibn ʿArabī's own time. This has led R. Hartmann, and subsequently Brockelmann,[9] to deny Ibn ʿArabī's authorship of the work and attribute it to someone writing later than Dhahabī (*d.* 748/1342). In fact, however, it is simply a question of a few interpolations—only to be found in some editions[10]—that have been inserted into a text the overall authenticity of which is beyond any doubt. Even a superficial reading of the *Kitāb muḥāḍarat al-abrār* allows one to be quite categorical: Ibn ʿArabī is indeed its author. This is attested irrefutably by the many references to his spiritual teachers (Shams Umm al-Fuqarā', Yūnus al-Hāshimī, Mawrūrī, etc.), companions and disciples (Ḥabashī, Qūnāwī's father, Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Harrār), and by the information he provides about his birth, family, travels, encounters in Cairo and Jerusalem, about his correspondence with King Kaykā'ūs and about his poems (which are mostly to be found either in the *Dīwān* or in the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*). Certain details even enable one to establish that Ibn ʿArabī composed the work over a very long period of time. So, for example, at the start of the first volume of the *Muḥāḍarat al-abrār* Ibn ʿArabī refers briefly to the reign of Caliph al-Nāṣir li Dīn-Allāh (*d.* 622/1225) and adds the following remark: 'He was granted allegiance on the 25th of Dhū l-qaʿda 575, and now we are in Shawwāl,

8. Ibid., p.187; cf. also J. Aguadé, 'Some remarks about sectarian movements in al-Andalus', *Studia Islamica* 64, pp.53–79.
9. Supplementband I, p.499, § 130.
10. Cf. e.g. the Beirut edition of 1968, I, p.460, which contains a reference to Suyūṭī (*d.* 911/1505) that is not to be found in the Cairo edition of 1906.

611—may God prolong his days . . .'. But he clearly completed this statement quite a few years later, because he adds the information that in 623 Caliph al-Ẓāhir was succeeded by al-Mustanṣir (*d.* 640/1242): 'it is he who is the present ruler at the time that I am writing' (*huwa al-khalīfa al-ān ḥīna taqyīdī hādhā*).[11] Al-Mustanṣir was caliph from 623 to 640 but, as the *Kitāb muḥāḍarat al-abrār* is included in the *Fihris* drawn up by Ibn ᶜArabī in 627H,[12] we are able to conclude that he must have written it between 611 and 627H.

If there is no problem as far as the authorship of the *Ijāza li l-Malik al-Muẓaffar* is concerned, we do have a problem with the identity of the person for whom it was intended. At the start of the text Ibn ᶜArabī specifies that he is addressing the certificate to a person called 'al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Bahā' al-Dīn Ghāzī b. Malik al-ᶜĀdil'. A glance through any list of Ayyubid sultans[13] reveals that two of them—both living during the same period—could have been referred to by this name: either al-Malik al-Ashraf I Muẓaffar al-Dīn Mūsā b. Malik al-ᶜĀdil, who ruled first of all at Mayyāfāriqīn from 607 to 618 and then at Damascus from 627 until his death in 635/1238, or al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Shihāb al-Dīn Ghāzī b. al-Malik al-ᶜĀdil, who reigned at Mayyāfāriqīn from 627 to 645/1247. O. Yahia equated the addressee of the *Ijāza* with the ruler of Damascus,[14] and he is very probably correct. Ibn ᶜArabī in fact specifies at the beginning of the text that he wrote this *Ijāza* in Damascus in 632H, which is when al-Ashraf happens to have been ruler of the city. There is also the fact that, whereas a reference in the *Futūḥāt* establishes Ibn ᶜArabī visited Mayyāfāriqīn at least once during his years of travels through the East,[15] we know he no longer left Syria after 620; and yet in 632 al-Malik Muẓaffar Shihāb al-Dīn was in Mayyāfāriqīn.

Before examining the *Ijāza* itself it is worth recalling that Ibn ᶜArabī was over seventy years old when he wrote this certificate, in which he mentions the masters whose company he used to keep—in the case of some of them over forty years previously. The passing of time, the author's old age and a memory which—on his own admission—sometimes faltered, all help to explain a few slips and inaccuracies which crept in when he was recording the names of his teachers.

11. *Muḥāḍarat*, I, pp.48–9.
12. O. Yahia, R.G. § 142.
13. For example the one drawn up by Zambaur, *Manuel de Généalogie et de Chronologie*, Osnabrück, Biblioverlag, 1976, pp.97–99, or the one in Stephen Humphreys' *From Saladin to the Mongols*, State University of New York, 1977, pp.381–93.
14. *Histoire et classification*, I, p.48.
15. *Fut.*, IV, p.225.

IBN ᶜARABĪ'S TRAINING IN THE TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS DISCIPLINES, ACCORDING TO HIS *IJĀZA*

IBN ᶜARABĪ'S *Ijāza* falls into two parts. The first part is an inventory of the teachers in the traditional religious sciences (Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, etc.) whom he frequented in the West as well as in the East; in the second part, which is of no concern to us here, he has drawn up a list of his numerous writings. If we are to arrive at a genuinely meaningful reconstruction of the network of relationships that existed between Ibn ᶜArabī and the savants of Andalusia and the Maghreb[16] it will be necessary wherever possible to distinguish in his *mashyakha* or list of shaikhs between those who were his teachers and those from whom he just obtained a certificate *in absentia* (*ijāza ᶜāmma*) without actually meeting them.

It is worth emphasising that the majority of the teachers mentioned by Ibn ᶜArabī in his *mashyakha* were among the most famous savants or *ᶜulamā'* of the Almohad era. What is more, seven of them (Ḥajarī, Ibn Zarqūn, Ibn Abī Jamāra, Tādilī, Ibn al-Kharrāṭ, Ibn al-Faras and Ibn Samḥūn) held the official posts of *qāḍī* or *khaṭīb* under the Almohads. This makes it very clear that Ibn ᶜArabī's personal development is not something that took place on the fringes of the Andalusian intellectual élite but that, on the contrary, he was sometimes on the closest of terms with the *ᶜulamā'* and with official religious circles. In fact this observation happens to apply to the majority of Andalusian Sufis during Ibn ᶜArabī's lifetime. From the study by D. Urvoy it emerges very plainly that the Almohad era saw a significant strengthening of the links between on the one hand asceticism and Sufism and, on the other hand, both the traditional religious disciplines—especially *ḥadīth*—and the literary ones. One also notes that at least seven of these *ᶜulamā'*—some of whom were Ibn ᶜArabī's spiritual teachers—were themselves Sufis. The *muḥaddith* Ayyūb al-Fihrī was a disciple of Abū Madyan, Abū Yaᶜzā, Ibn Mujāhid and Ibn Ghālib; Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Fāsī was to invest Ibn ᶜArabī with the *khirqa* in Fez in 594, while Mīrtūlī was one of his first teachers, as we have already seen; Ibn al-Kharrāṭ had very close ties with Sufi circles and especially with Abū Madyan and Ibn Barrajān; and Ibn Ṣā'igh, Ibn al-ᶜĀs and Zawāwī were also teachers of Ibn ᶜArabī. But it is also true that some of the great *ᶜulamā'* of the time were not: they include Ibn Ḥubaysh (*d.* 584/1188), Ibn al-ᶜĀt (*d.* 609/1212), Ibn Baqī (*d.* 625/1228) and Ibn Wājib (*d.* 614/1217).

These minutiae apart, it is quite clear that Ibn ᶜArabī received a solid education in the Islamic West which focussed essentially on the Qur'ān and

16. For a list of them see Appendix 3.

ḥadīth. This is hardly likely to surprise anyone who has read the *Futūḥāt*. The space taken up in this work with quotations from the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* (with a marked preference for Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the case of *ḥadīth*), Ibn ʿArabī's constant concern to base his teaching on scriptural foundations and his strict attachment to the Sunna (displayed especially by the *waṣāyā* or 'testimonies' in the final chapter) all go to show the extreme importance in his eyes of a thorough study of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*; it was for the same reason that he continued perfecting his knowledge in these areas throughout the rest of his life. So, in the East we see him following the teaching of Ibn Sukayna (*d.* 607/1210) whom he met in Baghdad, and of the *qāḍī al-quḍāt* or 'judge of judges' of Damascus, ʿAbd al-Ṣamad al-Ḥarastānī (*d.* 614/1217), who transmitted to him Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and also of Naṣr b. Abī l-Faraj al-Hāshimī (*d.* 619/1222) who in Mecca taught him Abū Dāwūd's *Sunan*.

And yet for Ibn ʿArabī knowledge of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* was not something that could be reduced to a mere accumulation of often sterile erudition as in the case of the jurists or *fuqahā'*. Certainly there can be no accusing him of neglecting the *isnāds* or chains of transmission, and he was scrupulous in his respect for the utterance of the text (*matn*); but for him true knowledge of the *ḥadīth* derived from the divine teaching (*khiṭāb ilāhī*) granted as a favour to the 'saint-prophets', *al-awliyā' al-anbiya'*—a term which he applied to the most perfect of the saints. 'Prophecy', he writes, 'is simply divine speech.' This speech can manifest itself in various ways. Referring to the verse 'It does not happen to any man that God speaks to him other than through revelation or from behind a veil or by sending him a messenger' (Qur'ān 42:51), Ibn ʿArabī explains: 'Revelation is either what He projects into the hearts of His servants without intermediary, making them hear it inside themselves, or what He tells the servant from behind the veil of some form or other through which He speaks to him, . . . or what He says to him through the intermediary of a messenger . . .'.[17] Elsewhere[18] he specifies that the difference between a prophet and a saint is that to a prophet the revelation brings legislation (*al-waḥy bi l-tashrīʿ*) whereas in the case of a saint it is simply a confirmation of the authenticity of what has been brought by the prophet. In this way the saint conforms to the Law not just by imitation (*taqlīd*) but as a result of an inner certainty (*ʿalā baṣīratin*). According to Ibn ʿArabī this is the meaning of the verse in which God makes Muḥammad say, 'I call to God in accordance with an inner certainty (*ʿalā baṣīratin*)—both I and those who follow me' (Qur'ān 12:108). 'Those who follow' him truly are the heirs of the prophets (*warathat al-anbiyā'*), to whom God has shown the form of the Prophet (*maẓhar Muḥammad*) receiving from

17. *Fut.*, II, pp.375–6. 18. *Fut.*, I, p.150.

the form of Gabriel (*maẓhar Jibrīl*) the divine discourse together with the legal statutes it contains—in just the same way that the companions saw Gabriel at the time of his dialogue with the Prophet on the subject of 'submission, faith and charity' (*islām, īmān* and *iḥsān*). This, states Ibn ʿArabī, is why a saint (*walī*) may validate a *ḥadīth* which is adjudged apocryphal according to the usual criteria, and why he may on the other hand reject a *ḥadīth* which according to these same criteria is considered authentic.[19] 'I myself have been the recipient in this way of many legal prescriptions (*aḥkām*) which were given by Muḥammad and are acknowledged as forming part of his law by the doctors of the Law (*ʿulamā' al-rusūm*), even though up until that time I had had no knowledge of them whatsoever.'[20]

There are a good number of examples in Ibn ʿArabī's writings of this supernatural transmission of legal rules. Here are a couple: 'As for myself, I saw the Messenger of God in a vision of good omen (*ru'ya mubashshira*), and in the vision he commanded me to raise my hands during prayer at the moment of the *takbīr* of sanctification, when bowing and when straightening up from the bow'.[21] Ibn ʿArabī was later to discover that this ritual practice was recommended by *ḥadīth*s which he did not know existed. On another occasion the Prophet told him that prayer can be performed in front of the Kaʿba at any time, although everywhere else there are times when it is prohibited. 'I saw the Messenger of God when I was in Mecca. He showed me the Kaʿba and said: "You who dwell in this house, do not prevent anyone who has performed the circumambulations around it, regardless of the time of day or night, from praying in front of it regardless of the time of day or night, because from that person's prayer God creates an angel which will ask pardon of him right up to the Day of Resurrection".'[22]

As regards knowledge of the Qur'ān, we have already seen that at a very early stage Ibn ʿArabī had experienced the revelation 'in a rain of stars' (*tanzīl nujūman*). But he also experienced the descent of the Qur'ān in another and even more surprising form, as the following passage shows. 'In a dream I saw a being who was one of the angels; he gave me a piece of agglutinated earth, free of any dust and bottomless in depth. When I was holding it in my hands I discovered that this piece of earth was none other than His word, "Wherever you find yourself, turn towards Him . . . thank Me and do not be ungrateful!"'

19. Cf. *Fut.*, I, p.224; III, p.70.

20. *Fut.*, I, p.224.

21. *Fut.*, I, p.437. For the debates among the jurists about this particular practice see M.I. Fierro's article, 'La polémique à propos de *rafʿ al-yadayn fī l-ṣalāt* dans al-Andalus', in *Studia Islamica* 65, pp.69–90.

22. *Fut.*, I, pp.599, 706; II, p.254. Cf. also I, p.537 and II, p.253, where the Prophet transmits some rules (*aḥkām*) to Ibn ʿArabī regarding prayers for the dead.

(Qur'ān 2:150–2). I was stupefied; I was unable to deny either that this was the very essence of these verses, or that it was also a piece of earth. I was then told: "This was the way in which the Qur'ān was revealed (or the way in which these verses were revealed) to Muḥammad". At the same time I saw the Messenger of God, who was telling me: "This is how they were revealed to me (*hākadhā unzilat ᶜalayya*): experience it for yourself. Can you deny what you are witnessing?".'[23]

TRAINING IN LITERATURE ACCORDING TO THE *KITĀB MUḤĀḌARAT AL-ABRĀR*

Of all of Ibn ᶜArabī's writings, the *Kitāb muḥāḍarat al-abrār* certainly has to be grouped among those that have elicited the least interest from specialists concerned with the study of his school. At first sight there is nothing to justify defining this particular work as 'esoteric'. The principal themes which it unsystematically deals with are *isrā'īliyyāt* (traditions relating to Jews and Christians), sermons, fables, proverbs and the history of the Ancients. This is how Ibn ᶜArabī himself describes the work: 'I have included in this book—which I have entitled "The Conference of the Pious and the Conversation of the Perfect"—all kinds of literary stories (*adab*), sermons, proverbs, unusual anecdotes, chronicles of times gone by, the lives of the Ancients and of the Prophets, the history of kings both Arab and non-Arab, noble virtues, marvellous stories, traditions I have been told about the beginning of things and the creation of this world . . . as well as some talk which is entertaining and amusing while not serving to undermine religion . . .'.[24] Here we are faced with a classic example of a book of *adab*—a literary work aimed at being instructive, funny and erudite all at the same time, and destined for a fairly broad readership of *udabā'*, or literati.

It is worth pointing out in passing that spiritual teaching is not altogether absent from the work. Most often it remains just beneath the surface, but sometimes it emerges quite explicitly—as for example in the dialogue-form. So it is that we come across ᶜAbd Allāh Mawrūrī (later there will be more to say about this individual, who was a disciple of Abū Madyan and an intimate friend of Ibn ᶜArabī) describing to the author a series of visions (*waqā'iᶜ*) which reveal the great masters of Sufism such as Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī, Junayd, Bisṭāmī and Ghazālī asking subtle questions of Abū Madyan such as 'What is [true] unity (*tawḥīd*)?' or 'What is the secret of the secret?'[25] It would seem

23. *Fut.*, I, p.714. 24. *Muḥāḍarat*, I, p.2.
25. Cf. e.g. I, pp.173, 199; II, pp.14, 31, 148, 171, etc.

that, through the medium of a seemingly casual and informal book, Ibn ᶜArabī was attempting to communicate some fundamental notions about Sufism to 'non-initiates'—and, as a result, reach a wider audience.

However, the chief interest of the *Muḥāḍarat al-abrār* from our immediate point of view lies in the fact that it informs us with a fair degree of accuracy about Ibn ᶜArabī's contacts with the literati of his time as well as about the extent of his own literary erudition.

All the people mentioned in this work—linguists, grammarians and poets[26]—were the intellectual élite of the Almohad era, although there is a noticeable absence of any reference by Ibn ᶜArabī to literati such as Ibn Ḥawṭ Allāh (*d.* 613/1216) or Ibn Maḍā (*d.* 593/1196), to mention the names of just two men who were also among the most eminent representatives of literary life in the Islamic West during the twelfth century. The discussions and conversations which Ibn ᶜArabī held with these people more or less constitute the oral sources that lie behind the *Kitāb al-muḥāḍarat*. But he was equally dependent on written sources, and he drew up a list of these in his preface. The titles of the works—approximately forty in number—give a good idea of the simultaneously religious and edificatory aim which Ibn ᶜArabī had in mind when writing the *Kitāb al-muḥāḍarat*. For example, he mentions Ibn Jawzī's *Kitāb ṣafwat al-ṣafwa*, Qushayrī's *Risāla*, Sulamī's *Maqāmāt al-awliyā'*, the *Kitāb al-kāmil li-l-adīb* by Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-Mubarrad, Ibn ᶜAbd Rabbihi's *Kitāb al-ᶜiqd*, Jāḥiẓ's *Kitāb al-maḥāsin wa l-aḍdād*, Abū Tammām's *Kitāb al-ḥamāsa* and Ḥusrī's *Kitāb zuhrat al-adab*. Needless to say, in addition to these works he also mentions all the classics on the *Sīra* and *ḥadīth*. But it is clear nonetheless that the Shaikh al-Akbar had a special appreciation for 'profane' literature and also had certain affinities with literary circles. There is nothing at all surprising in this because, as we have already seen, during his time the majority of Andalusian Sufis also devoted themselves to *adab*; in this respect Ibn ᶜArabī was very much a part of the period in which he lived. But if one reads carefully the stories and poems contained in the *Kitāb al-muḥāḍarat*, one perceives that he only took an interest in *adab* or made use of it either to the extent that this literature invariably contains a moral and is therefore the expression of a kind of universal wisdom, or because it represents an excellent educational tool. This emerges very clearly from the preface to the book, where—apparently to justify the 'futile' nature of the work—Ibn ᶜArabī points to certain Andalusian Sufis, such as Ibn Mujāhid and his disciple Ibn Qassūm, who had made use of *adab* as well. Finally, the interest he shows in poetry is also to be explained as due to the fact that he himself was a poet. From the *Dīwān*, through the poems written as introductions to each chapter

26. See Appendix 4.

of the *Futūḥāt*, to the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*, he wrote thousands of verses. For him poetry was an appropriate instrument for the transmission of certain essential truths. So it is that he addresses a warning to readers of the *Futūḥāt* who might be tempted to ignore the verses that open each of the chapters: 'Consider carefully the verses placed at the start of each chapter of this book, because they contain knowledge (*ᶜulūm*) which I have deliberately put in them. Indeed you will find in these verses things which are not mentioned in the exposition of the corresponding chapter'.[27] Later we will see how Ibn ᶜArabī had a vision in which he saw an angel bring him the sura *al-Shuᶜarā'* ('The Poets') in the form of a parcel of light; it was as a consequence of this angelic descent that he composed one of his collections of poems, the *Dīwān al-maᶜārif*.[28]

THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL TRAINING

As we have seen, in both the traditional religious and literary disciplines Ibn ᶜArabī's erudition and training were generally speaking very broad and, as such, were fully in keeping with the culture and education of a twelfth-century Andalusian intellectual. Can the same be said of his acquaintance with speculative theology (*kalām*) and philosophy (*falsafa*)? What value did he attribute to these two branches of learning?

Firstly it is important to emphasise the fact that Ibn ᶜArabī's initiation into works of a doctrinal nature—not only philosophical works but even works relating to *taṣawwuf* or Sufism—happened relatively late. It was only in 586/1190, that is around twelve years after the commencement of his vocation, that he first became acquainted with Qushayrī's *Risāla* through the intermediary of his teacher Yūsuf al-Kūmī, even though this is among the most classic manuals of Sufism. *'I had never heard anything whatsoever about Qushayrī's* Risāla, *or about any other work of a similar kind*; I did not even know the meaning of the term "*taṣawwuf*".'[29] He was soon to make up for the delay, at least in the sphere of *taṣawwuf*. The historian Ibn ᶜAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī (*d.* 703/1303) informs us that he was even given the surname 'al-Qushayrī', so devoted he was to reading the *Risāla*.[30] And if we draw up a quick list of the authors on Sufism whom he refers to in his writings, we see that not a single one of the most famous of them is missing: Ghazālī, Tirmidhī, Niffarī, ᶜAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī, Sulamī, Qushayrī, Muḥāsibī, Abū Ṭālib al-

27. *Fut.*, IV, p.21; cf. also II, p.665.
28. Cf. below, Conclusion.
29. *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.71.
30. *Al-Dhayl wa l-takmila*, VI, p.493.

Makkī and so on. This is not even to mention Ibn al-ᶜArīf, Ibn Qasī, Ibn Masarra and Ibn Barrajān, who, as we saw earlier, are all authors whom he had studied in Andalusia in or around the year 590/1193.

The answer to our second question is to be found in the *muqaddima* or introduction to the *Futūḥāt*.[31] According to Ibn ᶜArabī *kalām* (speculative theology) is a useful science, but its usefulness is limited. He explains that in laying down the fundamental principles of this science the aim of the theologians (*mutakallimūn*) was to defend the religion against its enemies: people who by means of rational argumentation either denied the existence of God or at the very least rejected certain basic dogmas such as the Divine Attributes, prophecy, the Resurrection and so on. The theologians were accordingly compelled to use the same weapons as their adversaries in order to combat error and ignorance, and in so doing the work they performed was beneficial. However, Ibn ᶜArabī claims, *kalām* is only necessary for a few people, and one theologian per country is more or less all that is required (*shakhṣ wāḥid yakfī minhu fī l-balad*).[32] He also goes on to establish a distinction between the first of the theologians (*al-mutaqaddimūn*) and their epigones (*al-muta'akhkhirūn*).[33] The Imām al-Ḥaramayn[34] (*d.* 505/1111) and Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarā'inī[35] (*d.* 418/1028), not to mention Ghazālī[36]—all three of them famous representatives of Ashᶜarism—are referred to by him in terms of respect, although this does not prevent him from occasionally criticising them. It should also not be forgotten that he exchanged correspondence with another famous theologian, Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī[37] (*d.* 606/1209), although admittedly his intention was to try to make him abandon speculative thought and turn instead to the Way. 'Dear brother, why remain in this abyss instead of returning to the way of asceticism, of mortification and the retreats that have been prescribed by the Messenger of God?'[38] *A priori* there is no reason to suspect the historicity of this relationship between the two men, even though no trace survives of any letter or letters written by Rāzī to Ibn ᶜArabī. If we are to believe a statement in one of the manuscripts, one other short text by the Shaikh al-Akbar—the *Risāla fī wujūh al-qalb*—would seem also to have been written for the benefit of Rāzī and at his request.[39]

31. *Fut.*, I, pp.34–5.
32. *Fut.*, I, p.36.
33. *Fut.*, II, p.289.
34. *Fut.*, I, p.162; II, p.289; IV, p.52.
35. *Fut.*, I, p.204; II, pp.134, 289.
36. Ibn ᶜArabī cites Ghazālī very often. Cf. e.g. *Fut.*, II, pp.103, 262, 289, 345; IV, pp.89, 106, 260, etc.
37. *Risāla ilā l-imām al-Rāzī*, in *Rasā'il*, Hyderabad 1948, trans. Michel Vâlsan in *Études traditionnelles*, July–October 1961.
38. *Risāla ilā l-imām*, p.4.
39. Cf. O. Yahia, *Histoire et classification*, R.G. § 62.

In Ibn ᶜArabī's time Ashᶜarism was the most popular school in Andalusia as well as in the rest of the Islamic world, and Imām al-Ḥaramayn's *Irshād* was one of the most frequently studied works.[40] However, among Andalusian Sufis there were some who were adherents of Muᶜtazilism, as emerges from the following anecdote in the *Futūḥāt*.[41] I met Abū ᶜAbd Allāh b. Junayd, who was one of the masters of the Way. He was a native of Qabrafig, in the Ronda region, and adhered to the Muᶜtazilite *madhhab* [sic]. I noticed that he denied the possibility [for a man] to acquire the attribute corresponding to the Divine Name "*al-qayyūm*", and I made him abandon this thesis and his doctrine. The doctrine he subscribed to was the teaching of the creation of acts by servants, but he rallied to my view after I had explained to him the meaning of the verse, "Men are superior to women" (*al-rijāl qawwāmūn ᶜalā l-nisā'*, Qur'ān 4:34), in which God asserts the existence for man of a certain degree of *qayyūmiyya* or "existence". He had come to visit me and, after he had returned to his own country, I went to visit him and induced both him and his companions to abandon their doctrine regarding the creation of acts by man.'

This incident, as well as the letter to Rāzī, must not be allowed to create the wrong impression: as a general rule Ibn ᶜArabī tended to adopt an attitude of indifference towards the polemics which divided Muᶜtazilites and Ashᶜarites. Most of the time he was content simply to indicate the respective positions adopted by either side and eventually to refute them—although without really becoming involved in the controversy. In fact he would seem to have rejected not so much the theses propounded by either of the two sides as the intellectual process and method of reasoning which led them to maintain such-and-such a theory. For him, *ᶜaql* or intellect cannot lead to a decisive certainty, and whoever places too much reliance upon it is automatically condemned to discover truths that are only relative—although the person then makes the mistake of believing they are absolute. This means that in the disputes which divided the theologians, just as in the disputes which divided the jurists, nobody is entirely wrong and nobody is entirely right. The various passages in his writings in which Ibn ᶜArabī raises the problem of the attribution of acts demonstrate very clearly that, in spite of the statement cited above, he did not categorically reject the Muᶜtazilite position on this issue but endeavoured to show in what respect it was valid and in what respect it was false.[42]

40. Cf. *Le Monde des Ulémas*, p.188.

41. *Fut.*, II, p.182. The story is also reproduced in *Fut.*, III, p.45 and IV, p.79.

42. For the attribution of acts cf. *Fut.*, I, p.177; II, pp.66, 204, 604, 681; III, pp.84, 211, 303; IV, pp.33, 34, 129. The fundamental work on the debates among the theologians is Daniel Gimaret's *Théories de l'acte humain en théologie musulmane*, Paris 1980.

This meant that the opinions expressed by Ibn ᶜArabī sometimes agreed with the view held by the Ashᶜarites, sometimes with the view held by the Muᶜtazilites; most often they were in agreement with both parties at once. And yet he explains that he arrived at his own conclusions by a completely different route. One particular example is the case of the hotly debated issue as to the Vision of God in the future life—an issue on which, as we happen to know, Muᶜtazilites and Ashᶜarites were divided. According to Ibn ᶜArabī the Muᶜtazilites are quite right (*ṣadaqat al-muᶜtazila*) in denying the possibility of the Vision because all that one's gaze will be able to take in will be the Cloak of Divine Magnificence (*ridā' al-kibriyā'*)—and this 'Cloak' is the creation itself. Therefore we are that Magnificence in which the Divine Essence cloaks Itself (*naḥnu ᶜayn al-kibriyā' ᶜalā dhātihi*). One consequence of this is that in a sense all we will ever be able to see is ourselves. However, a few lines further on Ibn ᶜArabī states that the Ashᶜarites also have right on their side (*fa ṣadaqa al-ashᶜarī*) in asserting the possibility of the Vision, because the veil cannot help contemplating Him whom it veils (*al-ḥijāb yashhad al-maḥjūb*).[43]

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Ibn ᶜArabī adopts the same position with regard to philosophy (*falsafa*) as with regard to speculative theology. 'The science of the philosopher is not totally in vain', as he writes (*al-faylasūf laysa kullu ᶜilmihi bāṭilan*).[44] He clarifies and explains his point of view in chapter 226 of the *Futūḥāt*, which is concerned with the question of will (*irāda*):[45] 'I reject reflection because it engenders confusion (*talbīs*) and absence of veridicy (*ᶜadam al-ṣidq*) in the person who makes use of it. Furthermore, there is not one single thing that cannot be known through revelation (*kashf*) or spiritual experience (*wujūd*). Besides, to devote oneself to [speculative] reflection is a veil (*ḥijāb*). There are those who question this, but no man of the Way denies it; only the people of speculative reflection and reasoning by induction (*ahl al-naẓar wa l-istidlāl*) claim to contradict it. And if there are a few among them [i.e. the philosophers] who experience spiritual states, such as Plato the Sage, that is something extremely rare; those individuals are comparable to men of revelation and contemplation.'

This means that in Ibn ᶜArabī's eyes the only true philosopher, the only philosopher who deserves the name of 'sage' (*ḥakīm* here becomes a synonym for *ᶜārif*, gnostic), is he who endeavours to perfect his knowledge by means of contemplation and spiritual experience. The model for this type of philosopher is the man named by Ibn ᶜArabī in the passage just cited: the 'divine Plato' (*Aflaṭūn al-ilāhī*). The rest—those who rely only on their intellect

43. *Fut.*, IV, p.245. 44. *Fut.*, I, p.32. 45. *Fut.*, II, p.523.

(*ʿaql*)—will never grasp any more than a minuscule part of the truth. The Shaikh al-Akbar attempts to illustrate this point in a lengthy chapter of the *Futūḥāt*[46] in which he describes in the form of an allegory the simultaneous ascension (*miʿrāj*) of two individuals: one of them a believer who walks in the footsteps of a prophet, the other a philosopher who relies on his faculty of reason to lead him to the truth. Whereas the man of faith has his prophet to guide him, the philosopher claims he can accomplish the celestial journey on his own. The rest of the story is easy to guess. In each of the seven heavens that they arrive at the believer is greeted by the prophet who resides there, who initiates him into its secrets and transmits to him its spiritual knowledge. As for the philosopher, he is received by the ruling angel of the heaven, who only imparts to him a portion of the cosmological knowledge corresponding to that particular sphere. When he arrives at the seventh and final heaven, the heaven of Abraham, the philosopher finds himself prevented from continuing on his journey; he is told that he must retrace his steps, be converted, and finally perform all over again the journey which was made by the man of faith—who continues on his way until he reaches the threshold of the Divine Presence.

Ibn ʿArabī had himself had encounters with those whom he calls disbelieving philosophers. He had met one of them—a man who denied miracles—in Andalusia in 586/1190. 'This is what happened to me during a meeting I attended in 586. A certain philosopher (*shakhṣ faylasūf*) was present, a man who denied prophecy in the sense that it is defined by Muslims, rejected the miracles performed by the prophets and maintained that realities are immutable (*al-ḥaqā'iq lā tatabaddalu*). This happened during the winter, when the weather was particularly cold; in front of us was a large brazier (*manqal*). This incredulous liar explained that although the common herd claims [on the authority of the account in the Qur'ān] that Abraham was thrown into the fire which did not burn him, in truth fire by its very nature necessarily burns combustible matter; therefore the fire in question as mentioned by the Qur'ān in the story about Abraham was no more than a [symbolic] expression of Nimrod's anger and rage—in other words it was really the fire of wrath . . .. When he had come to the end of his speech, one of those who were present and who had attained to this station [i.e. the station of abandonment of charismata] . . . said to him: "Is that [the man pointed the brazier] not fire that burns?" "Yes", the other man replied. "Well see for yourself!", he cried, and threw some of the coals straight at the other man's chest; they remained clinging to his clothes until the man returned them

46. Chapter 167, *Fut.*, II, pp.273–9. It has been translated into French by S. Ruspoli, *L'Alchimie du bonheur parfait*, Paris 1981.

with his hands. When the infidel saw that they did not burn him, he was surprised and placed them back in the brazier. Then [the man] said to him: "Now put your hand near the fire'. He did so and burned himself . . .. The disbeliever was converted, and from that time onwards acknowledged [miracles].'[47]

The most famous of all the Andalusian philosophers whom Ibn ʿArabī met was Averroes; the reader will remember the account of their first encounter at Cordoba, when Ibn ʿArabī was a mere fifteen years old. In the same passage of the *Futūḥāt*[48] he describes his second meeting (if one can use such a word in referring to an encounter that took place outside the physical world) at a later date with the man who wrote the great *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*. 'Subsequently I had the wish to meet him a second time. He was shown to me—God have mercy on him!—in a vision (*wāqiʿa*), in a certain form. A light veil had been placed between him and me so that I could see him although he could not see me and was unaware of my presence. He was so absorbed that he paid no attention to me, and I said to myself: "This is not someone who is destined to follow the same path as me".'

It emerges that Ibn ʿArabī distinguished clearly between two different types of philosopher. On the one hand there is the philosopher-infidel whose punishment in hell will, he declares,[49] be to be afflicted by the same ignorance which had been the lot of the ignorant believer in this world (whereas, contrariwise, the believer will be rewarded in paradise with the knowledge which had belonged to the philosopher-infidel on earth). On the other hand there is the philosopher-believer, such as Averroes. Certainly he is superior to the first type, but his possibilities remain limited; he will never attain to the level of knowledge possessed by the *walī* or saint. The 'divine Plato' therefore remains an altogether exceptional case, and clearly Ibn ʿArabī knew of no one who was Plato's equal among his own contemporaries.

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When reading Ibn ʿArabī's works one cannot help perceiving that his knowledge of philosophy was very superficial and, what is more, that he had no desire whatever to increase it. His reaction to a passage in *The Ideal City* by Fārābī (*d.* 339/950) gives a good idea of the sense of repulsion which philosophical language produced in him. 'I have seen an infidel (*baʿḍ ahl al-*

47. *Fut.*, II, p.371. It is very probable that the anonymous person who used his miraculous power to bring this conversion about was none other than Ibn ʿArabī himself.

48. *Fut.*, I, p.154.

49. *Fut.*, II, p.284, where he cites the case of another philosopher-infidel who under his influence was converted.

kuffār) declare in a book called *The Ideal City* (I had found this book, which I had not seen previously, at the home of an acquaintance of mine in Marchena of the Olives, had picked it up to see what it was about and came across the following passage): "In this chapter I wish to examine how to postulate [the existence of] a divinity in the world". He had not said God (*Allāh*)! I was amazed and threw the book at its owner's face.'[50] Is Ibn ᶜArabī just pretending he does not know the name of the 'impious' author of *The Ideal City*, or had he really never heard of Fārābī's name? The first alternative is the more likely. As a reader of Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'* he must have glanced through—if not actually read—the *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* or at the very least the *Tahāfut*, in which he was bound to gain some indirect acquaintance with the general trends in Islamic philosophy. And yet one notes in his own writings the apparent absence of any reference to Avicenna, Kindī or even Ibn Ṭufayl—an Andalusian like Ibn ᶜArabī himself, and only slightly older than he was. If he had some idea of what they stood for—even through the bias of works that criticised them—he saw no value in either discussing or even mentioning them. What is more, in spite of the fact that—thanks to the circumstances already described—he was personally acquainted with Averroes, there is no sign that he ever read his works. On the other hand he refers at least twice to Ibn Sīd of Badajoz (*d.* 521/1127) and his Pythagorean interpretation of Unity. This fact is even more remarkable when we consider that Ibn Sīd was known primarily for his works on grammar and philology. According to Asín Palacios, who seems not to have been aware that Ibn ᶜArabī refers to him, *The Book of Circles*—which was Ibn Sīd's only truly philosophical work—was mainly studied in the Jewish intellectual circles of Andalusia.[51] In this particular treatise Ibn Sīd expounds a Neoplatonic system of emanation into which he has incorporated elements of Pythagorean teaching—a fact which did not escape the Shaikh al-Akbar, who says of him: 'Regarding the question of Unity (*Tawḥīd*) he taught the doctrine of the Pythagoreans, who establish Unity by means of number which they use to prove the Unity of God'.[52] It is clear that he is referring here to the *Book of Circles* (in fact almost certainly to chapter four of the treatise, which summarises the Neopythagorean doctrine of Number), even though in the *Sharḥ khalᶜ al-naᶜlayn* he calls the book the *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* or 'Book of Unity'.[53]

50. *Fut.*, III, p.178.

51. Asín Palacios, *Obras escogidas*, II, pp.487–562. Cf. also H. Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, pp.325–27.

52. *Fut.*, III, p.358.

53. *Sharḥ kitāb khalᶜ al-naᶜlayn*, f° 93b. There can be no doubting that the work in question is the one which bears the title *Book of Circles (Kitāb al-ḥadā'iq)* in the list compiled by Asín Palacios; it will also be noted that his list contains no reference to a work by the name of *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*.

To this lack of knowledge of Arab philosophy we must add a blatant ignorance of Greek philosophy. Apart from a reference to the *Sirr al-asrār* by pseudo-Aristotle,[54] which was a work that enjoyed an exceptionally large circulation in the Arab world, and another reference to Hippocrates' *Book of the Elements*,[55] his allusions to Plato, Socrates or Aristotle are always very vague and it is quite clear that he had not read them.[56] As for what he knew of Neoplatonism, we have already seen that he was basically indebted for it to the works of Ibn Masarra and to the *Epistles* of the Brethren of Purity.

Finally, it is worth emphasising that there is no reference or quotation to suggest that Ibn ᶜArabī knew any other languages apart from Arabic and very probably Berber—which was commonly spoken in medieval Andalusia and was the mother tongue of several of his teachers. Consequently if (as R. Austin has proposed, although without being able to cite any specific source in support of his contention)[57] he had some knowledge of Jewish philosophy and esotericism—and in particular of the Kabbala, which was blossoming in the Andalusia of his time—he probably acquired what he knew as a result of encounters with Jewish literati who spoke Arabic. So, for example, he relates a discussion he had one day with a Rabbi about the esoteric significance of the letter *bā'*;[58] from this particular episode it emerges that he knew that the Torah as well as the Qur'ān begins with this letter. However, although in his writings we certainly find a few rare and very general allusions to the Torah,[59] they would seem for example not to contain any reference whatever to Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*—a work written in 1190 and cited by Ibn Sabᶜin. The same comments apply to his knowledge of Persian literature. Through his Iranian friends and disciples—especially Qūnawī and Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī (*d.* 635/1238)—he could not

Possibly we are to deduce from this that the work in question—which probably enjoyed a wider circulation than Asín Palacios suggests—was known by both of these titles.

54. *Tadbīrāt ilāhiyya*, ed. Nyberg, p.120.

55. *Fut.*, I, p.56. Hippocrates' theory about the elements was known to the Arabs through the intermediary of Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq's work, *Fī l-uṣṭuqiṣāt ᶜalā ra'y Ibūqrāṭ* (cf. *GAL*, I, p.369). Doubtless Ibn ᶜArabī's reference is to this particular work.

56. Cf. e.g. *Muḥāḍarat*, II, p.243, where he quotes a maxim attributed to each of these philosophers.

57. Ibn ᶜArabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. R.W.J. Austin, London 1980, introduction, p.23.

58. *Fut.*, I, p.83.

59. Cf. e.g. *Fut.*, II, p.261, where he states that the verse 'Do not say: I will do such-and-such a thing tomorrow without adding "if God wills" ' (Qur'ān 18:23) is to be found in the Torah 'in the Hebrew language'. To my knowledge the only passage in the Old Testament which bears even a slight resemblance to this saying occurs in Ecclesiastes (Sir. 39.6); but the text in question is in Greek, not 'in the Hebrew language'.

possibly have remained unfamiliar with the works of the Shaikh al-Ishrāq, who was executed at Aleppo in 587/1191. But a search through the corpus of Ibn ᶜArabī's writings for even the slightest reference to the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* or any other of Suhrawardī's writings reveals nothing at all.

There are some who have attributed to Ibn ᶜArabī an acquaintance with Indian literature, and have even gone so far as to ascribe to him the translation of a treatise on yoga called the *Amratkund (Kitāb ḥawḍ al-ḥayāt)* on the grounds that the text of this work is to be found in *majmūᶜāt* or 'compilations' of some of his authentic writings. Recently I have seen a manuscript of this kind, dating from the nineteenth century and belonging to a private Moroccan collection. The ascription, as was shown by Massignon and later by O. Yahia, is quite clearly absurd.[60] However, an article which has only recently been published testifies to the continuance of this legend down to the present day.[61]

60. Cf. O. Yahia, *Histoire et classification*, R.G. § 230.

61. M.R. Tarafaldar, 'The Bengali Muslims in the Precolonial Period', *Islam et Société en Asie du Sud*, Paris 1986, p.107, n.42.

5. God's Vast Earth

'I AM THE QUR'ĀN AND THE SEVEN SUBSTITUTES'

'WHEN, in Andalusia, I arrived at the Mediterranean sea'—so Ibn ᶜArabī tells his disciple Qūnawī—'I resolved not to make the crossing until I had been allowed to see all the internal and external states that God had destined for me until the time of my death. So I turned towards God with total concentration and in a state of contemplation and vigilance that were perfect; God then showed me all my future states, both internal and external, right through to the end of my days. I even saw that your father, Isḥāq b. Muḥammad, would be my companion, and you as well. I was made aware of your states, the knowledge you would acquire, your experiences and stations, and of the revelations, theophanies and everything else with which God was to grace you. I then went to sea, with insight and certainty as my possession. Everything was and everything is just as it was bound to be.'[1]

In all probability it was in Algeciras (*Jazīrat al-khaḍrā'*)[2] that, in the year 589/1193, Ibn ᶜArabī had this vision of his own future and the future of his disciples. The Andalusian port of Algeciras was linked with Ceuta by an endless stream of sea-traffic, facing it across the Strait of Gibraltar; the 'green island' of the Arab geographers, it is where Khaḍir is said to have gone with Moses to rebuild the wall of the two orphans,[3] and it was certainly from here that the young shaikh set sail for the Maghreb for the first time in the year 589.

On his arrival in Algeciras he visited Shaikh Ibrāhīm b. Ṭarīf al-ᶜAbsī,[4] who

1. Jandī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, pp.215–20.

2. Regarding Algeciras cf. *EI²* s.v. *al-Djazīrat al-khaḍrā'*; Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-mushtāq*, ed. and trans. R. Dozy and M.J. de Goeje, Leiden 1968, pp.212–13.

3. The tradition is recorded in the *Dhikr bilād al-andalus*, I, p.68, and by Zuhrī (6th/12th century) in his *Kitāb al-jaghrāfiya*, ed. M. Hadj Sadok, p.214.

4. Cf. *Fut.*, I, p.617, where Ibn ᶜArabī states that he met the shaikh at Algeciras in 589; also his biographical sketch of him in the *Rūḥ*, where he mentions that he met him twice in Algeciras

according to the author of the *Takmila*[5] was a disciple of Abū l-Rabīᶜ al-Mālaqī (a member of the Almerian school)[6] and of Ibn Mujāhid before he himself became the teacher of Abū ᶜAbd Allāh al-Qurashī[7] (*d.* 599/1202).

Soon afterwards he landed at Ceuta and began his first tour of the Maghreb. He apparently stayed for a while in Ceuta itself—at least long enough to follow the teaching of three great *muḥadditḥs* who were living there at the time: ᶜAbd Allāh al-Ḥajarī (*d.* 591/1194), who in Ramaḍān 589 transmitted to him Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*;[8] Ibn al-Ṣā'igh[9] (*d.* 600/1203), transmitter of Ibn Bashkuwāl and Ibn Quzmān and also a Sufi who according to Ibn ᶜArabī had attained to the 'level of the Red Sulphur';[10] and finally Ayyūb al-Fihrī (*d.* 609/1212), a disciple of Ibn Ḥubaysh and Ibn Bashkuwāl in the traditional religious sciences but also a companion of Abū Yaᶜzā and Abū Madyan, who died a martyr in the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa.[11] Another person who attended these gatherings was the *qāḍī* or judge of Ceuta, Abū Ibrāhīm b. Yaghmūr (*d.* approx. 609/1212). A bond of friendship was forged between him and Ibn ᶜArabī, who praises him in the *Futūḥāt* for his

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and once in Ceuta together with his disciple Ḥabashī (these last two meetings took place, as we will see later, in or around 594–5). See *Rūḥ* § 25, p.119; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.128–29; and *Kitāb al-kutub*, p.9, in *Rasā'il*, Hyderabad 1948.

5. *Takmila*, ed. A. Bel and Bencheneb, Algiers 1910, § 402. Cf. also Ṣafī al-Dīn Ibn Abī Manṣūr, *Risāla*, pp.111, 118, 120, 121, and the biobibliographical sketch by Denis Gril, p.218.

6. For Abū l-Rabīᶜ al-Mālaqī—who was himself a disciple of Ibn al-ᶜArīf—cf. *Fut.*, III, p.508 and IV, p.474; *Rūḥ*, pp.99, 120; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.101, 104, 128–29; Ibn Abī Manṣūr, *Risāla*, p.118, and the biobibliographical sketch on p.222.

7. An Andalusian Sufi from Algeciras who was also taught by Abū l-Rabīᶜ al-Mālaqī. Cf. Ibn ᶜArabī, *Tajalliyāt*, p.26, in *Rasā'il*; Ibn Abī Manṣūr, *Risāla*, pp.88, 111–16 and the sketch on p.232.

8. *Fut.*, I, p.32; III, p.334; *Ijāza*, p.180. For Ḥajarī cf. *Takmila*, ed. Codera, § 1416, and *Nayl*, p.135.

9. *Fut.*, II, p.528; III, p.334; IV, p.489; *Rūḥ* § 38, p.123; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.136; *Tashawwuf*, § 198, p.377; *Takmila*, ed. Codera, § 2070; *Ṣilat al-ṣila*, § 391, p.200.

10. *Rūḥ*, p.123. Red Sulphur is an alchemical symbol and refers to the material capable of transforming silver into gold; this is the sense in which Ibn ᶜArabī uses the term in the *Tadbīrāt ilāhiyya*, ed. Nyberg, p.219. The expression is often used in Sufi vocabulary as a metaphor indicating the excellence of the spiritual level attained by a saint, or *walī*; Ibn ᶜArabī himself is often referred to by his disciples as *kibrīt al-aḥmar*. Shaᶜrānī (*d.* 973/1565) used the expression as the title for one of the works he devoted to the teaching of the Shaikh al-Akbar (*al-Kibrīt al-aḥmar fī bayān ᶜulūm al-Shaykh al-Akbar*, Cairo, 1369H, in the margin of the *Yawāqīt wa l-jawāhir*). The 'red sulphur' which—according to the quotation from the *Kitāb al-isrā'* used as the epigraph to this book—the pilgrim sets out in search of in 'the city of the Messenger' is none other than the 'inheritance' reserved for whoever attains to the Station of Muḥammad.

11. *Fut.*, III, p.334; *Ijāza*, p.180; *Tashawwuf*, § 240, p.415; *Takmila*, ed. Bencheneb, § 536; Ibn Qunfudh, *Uns al-faqīr*, p.32.

exceptional integrity.[12] To him he represented the perfect example of a just governor: anger had no hold over him, and when he punished and applied the legal penalties prescribed by the *sharīᶜa* he acted solely out of obedience towards God and out of mercy towards the guilty party, who in this way was purified of his wrongdoing. This, Ibn ᶜArabī tells us, was how Abū Ibrāhīm behaved—a man 'who wept abundantly, meditated intensely, practised *dhikr* unceasingly and reconciled enemies'.[13]

Ibn ᶜArabī did not linger too long in Ceuta, and was soon continuing on his pilgrimage. His destination was Tunis—and specifically Shaikh ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz al-Mahdawī. The idea of making this visit had come to him quite suddenly. One day in 589, he explains in the *Rūḥ*,[14] he set off from Seville and wandered along the western coast until he arrived at Rota,[15] where he performed the Friday prayer. It was there that he met for the first time Muḥammad b. Ashraf al-Rundī, one of the seven substitutes (*abdāl*). 'He told me many things and promised me that I would meet him again in Seville. I stayed with him for three days, then left. He predicted to me in detail everything that was to happen to me after we separated, and everything came to pass as he had said. On my return to Seville, God put the idea into my head of going back to see him so as to gain benefit from his company. It was a Tuesday; I asked my mother's permission and she gave it. The next morning there was a knock on the door. When I went to open it I found a man from the desert who asked me, "Are you Muḥammad b. al-ᶜArabī?" "Yes", I replied. He went on to tell me: "While I was walking between Marchena and Purchena I met a man who inspired a reverential fear in me. He asked me if I was going to Seville and I said yes. Then he said to me: 'Find the house of Muḥammad b. al-ᶜArabī, meet the man in person and tell him that his companion al-Rundī sends him his greetings. Tell him also that I counted on coming to see him, but that he will suddenly conceive the desire to go to Tunis. May he travel in peace and—God willing—he will see me when he returns to Seville' ". What he said did indeed come to pass, because the next day I left to visit you [i.e. Shaikh Mahdawī].'[16]

At the beginning of the *Futūḥāt*[17] Ibn ᶜArabī states that he stayed twice at

12. *Fut.*, III, p.334. Ibn Yaghmūr was *qāḍī* of Fez, Ceuta, Valencia, Jaén as well as other places. He disappeared in the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa (*Nayl*, pp.99–100).

13. *Fut.*, III, p.334.

14. *Rūḥ*, § 18, pp.110–13; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.116–121; *Fut.*, II, p.7.

15. This small coastal town, not far from Cadiz, still exists today; in Ibn ᶜArabī's time it had a mosque which was famous throughout Andalusia and had become a place of pilgrimage. Marrākushī (*Muᶜjib*, p.228) writes that people came from every corner of Andalusia to pray in the mosque.

16. The *Rūḥ al-quds*—written in Mecca in 600—is addressed to ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz Mahdawī.

17. *Fut.*, I, p.9.

Tunis with Shaikh Mahdawī: first of all in 590/1194, followed by his return to Andalusia, and secondly in 598/1201, just before he left for Cairo never to return to the West. The incident at Rota must have taken place in 589, shortly before his crossing at Algeciras and his arrival at Tunis in 590H, because at the end of the passage quoted above Ibn ᶜArabī writes that he subsequently returned to Seville where he met up with al-Rundī once again.

The account in the *Rūḥ* raises a question. If one fine morning Ibn ᶜArabī left Seville to go and see al-Mahdawī, he must already have known of him by name and reputation. Who was it who told him about him? We are not in a position to give an exact answer to the question, but most probably he was told by one of the teachers associated with Abū Madyan—who was himself one of Mahdawī's teachers.

Between Ceuta and Tunis Ibn ᶜArabī no doubt stopped off in Tlemcen—unless he only broke his journey there on his return. At any rate he stayed there in 590/1194,[18] and it was there that he met the mystical poet Abū Yazīd al-Fazāzī (*d.* 627/1230).[19] During this same trip to Tlemcen he also made the acquaintance of a saintly man called Abū ᶜAbd Allāh al-Tartūsī,[20] who during a discussion with Ibn ᶜArabī evinced a critical attitude towards Abū Madyan. At once Ibn ᶜArabī—whose veneration for Abū Madyan knew no bounds—formed an aversion towards al-Tartūsī, but that same night he had a dream in which he saw the Prophet rebuke him. 'The Messenger of God asked me: "Why do you hate so-and-so?" I replied: "Because he hates Abū Madyan!" He said to me: "Does he not love God and me?" I answered: "Certainly he does; he loves God and he loves you". He replied: "Why then do you hate him for hating Abū Madyan rather than love him for loving God and His Messenger?" I answered: "Messenger of God, I have committed an error and have been negligent. I now repent, and he is one of the people whom I love the most! You have warned me and counselled me". When I woke up I took some valuable clothes, climbed into my saddle, went to the man's house and told him what had happened. He wept and accepted the gift, and understood that the vision was a warning from God. His reservations about Abū Madyan vanished immediately, and he started to love him'.[21]

The name of Tunis is almost inseparable from the name of the famous mosque Zaytūna, which was built in 114/732.[22] However, in his *Nuzhat al-mushtāq* Idrīsī (*d.* approx. 560/1165) does not even so much as refer to it: 'The last-mentioned town [i.e. Tunis] is beautiful, surrounded in every

18. *Fut.*, I, p.379; IV, p.498.
19. *Fut.*, I, p.379. For Fazāzī cf. *Takmila*, ed. Codera, § 1641, *Nayl*, p.163; *GAL*, S.I, 482.
20. *Durra*, § 66, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.155; *Fut.*, IV, p.498.
21. *Fut.*, IV, p.498.
22. For details about the mosque cf. *EI*² s.v. *Masjid*.

direction by cultivated plains yielding wheat and barley as their principal produce . . ., inhabited and visited by neighbouring populations and by foreigners from distant lands; it is encircled by solid earthen entrenchments and has three gates. All the fruit and vegetable gardens are situated inside the city; outside it there is nothing worth mentioning . . .'.[23]

Did Ibn ᶜArabī like the town? Clearly he did, because after his arrival in 590/1194 he stayed on for almost a year in the company of Shaikh ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz Mahdawī and of Mahdawī's teacher, Shaikh Ibn Khamīs al-Kinānī al-Jarrāḥ, who was another disciple of Abū Madyan and lived in the port. 'He [Shaikh Kinānī] was a surgeon in Tunis. To go to see him I made the journey barefooted in spite of the intense heat, following the example of my two teachers Abū Yaᶜqūb and Abū Muḥammad al-Mawrūrī[24] who told me that this is how they had gone to visit him.'[25] A passage in the *Durrat al-fākhira* reveals that a deep affinity and indeed complicity had rapidly become established between Muḥyī l-Dīn and Kinānī. 'This eminent man was one of the shaikhs of Abd al-ᶜAzīz al-Mahdawī, and yet Mahdawī did not know him in his full reality because the shaikh did not totally unveil himself to him . . .. I remained in his company for a little less than a year. Before my departure he insisted that I say nothing either to ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz al-Mahdawī or to anyone else about his true state. He also asked me not to give any more thought to it.'[26] Evidently Ibn ᶜArabī—contrary to Mahdawī—was able to perceive Shaikh Kinānī's true spiritual calibre. This is all the more significant because there is a passage in the *Futūḥāt* which suggests the insight was reciprocal. In the preface to this work Ibn ᶜArabī relates—in a tone which would seem to betray some bitterness—that at the time of his first stay in Tunis in 590H Shaikh Mahdawī manifested a certain coldness towards him; 'but', he adds, 'I forgave him because it was my outer state and the evidence of appearances which led him to do so. I had in fact hidden both from him and from his disciples what I really was by adopting an external manner of behaviour which was atrocious . . .'.[27] He explains that one of the causes of this initial rejection to which Mahdawī and his entourage subjected him was the famous verses he recited to them one day when everyone was present, in

23. *Nuzhat al-mushtāq*, trans. Dozy, p.130. Cf. also the translation by Hadj Sadok, *Le Maghrib au 12ᵉ siècle*, O.P.U. 1983, p.122, and Yāqūt (*d.* 627/1229), *Muᶜjam al-buldān*, Beirut 1936, II, pp.6off. Zuhrī—a geographer who was a contemporary of Idrīsī—does give a description of the Zaytūna mosque: cf. *Kitāb al-jaghrāfiya*, ed. M. Hadj Sadok, para. 275.
24. We will return to this person later. Like Abū Yaᶜqūb al-Kūmī and Kinānī he was a disciple of Abū Madyan, and perhaps it was one of these two masters who suggested that Ibn ᶜArabī go to see Mahdawī in Tunis.
25. *Rūḥ*, § 52, p.125; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.140–41.
26. *Durra*, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.141.
27. *Fut.*, I, p.9.

which he declared 'I am the Qur'ān and the Seven Substitutes'.[28] Any assertion of this kind, in which the speaker identifies himself with the Divine Word, is obviously blasphematory by nature, and the statement by Ibn ʿArabī just cited clearly indicates that it was not a question here of an 'ecstatic pronouncement' or *shaṭḥ*—uttered while in the grip of a condition of spiritual agitation—but of a kind of deliberate provocation aimed at concealing at least temporarily his state of 'pure servanthood' or *ʿubūdiyya*. However, he further qualifies himself by adding a remark which shows that although his reciting of this scandalous verse was premeditated, the verse itself was nonetheless inspired and is in no way an expression of egoistic self-importance: 'By God, of those verses that I recited there was not one single one which I did not hear as if I was dead . . .. In all that noble gathering there was nobody who perceived me [as I was in reality] with the exception of Abū ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Murābiṭ; but his perception was only very vague because he was still overwhelmed with confusion about me. As for the old shaikh Jarrāḥ (God have mercy on him), we had revealed ourselves to each other, mutually and voluntarily, during a sublime meeting (*qad takāshaftu maʿahu ʿalā niyyat fī ḥaḍratin ʿaliyyat*)'.[29]

Ibn ʿArabī and Kinānī also had a friend in common: Khaḍir. 'I was in the port of Tunis, on a small boat at sea, when I was gripped by a pain in the stomach. While the other passengers slept I went to the side of the boat to look out at the sea. Suddenly, in the light of the moon which on that particular night was full, I caught sight of someone in the distance who was coming towards me walking on the water. As he drew level with me he stopped and lifted one foot while balancing on the other; I saw that the sole of his foot was dry. He then did the same with his other foot, and I saw the same thing. After that he spoke to me in a language which is unique to him; he then took his leave and went off in the direction of the lighthouse which stood at the top of a hill a good two miles away. It took him three paces to travel the distance . . .. Possibly he went to visit Shaikh Ibn Khamīs al-Kinānī, one of the great masters of the Way who lived at Marsā ʿĪdūn and from whose place I was returning on that particular evening.'[30] The reference to Shaikh Kinānī allows us to date this second encounter with Khaḍir with complete certainty to 590H as opposed to 598H, which was the year of Ibn ʿArabī's second visit to Tunis. This is because in a small work written by Ibn ʿArabī in 590H on his return from Tunis, he mentions Shaikh Kinānī, applies to him the formula

28. Ibn ʿArabī was later to preserve this verse in writing in the *Kitāb al-isrā'*, which he wrote in Fez in 594/1198. The verse was used again by Shushtarī (*d.* 668/1269): cf. Louis Massignon, *Passion*, II, p.419. It will be remembered that the expression 'the Seven Substitutes' is a traditional way of referring to the sura *al-Fātiḥa*.

29. *Fut.*, I, p.10. 30. *Fut.*, I, p.186.

of *taraḥḥum* (the formula for someone who has died) and specifies that he was buried at Marsā ʿĪdūn.[31] In other words Shaikh Kinānī died in 590/1194, between the time of Ibn ʿArabī's arrival in Tunis and the time of his return to Seville a little less than a year later; the meeting with Khaḍir in the port of Tunis will therefore have taken place during this same period.

Mahdawī's attitude to Ibn ʿArabī in 590H is rather surprising, because although he distanced himself from this doubtless rather unusual disciple the opposite was not the case: Ibn ʿArabī experienced a very real and profound veneration for the man. It was for him that he was later to write the *Rūḥ al-quds* and undertake the composition of the *Futūḥāt makkiyya*, in which he always refers to him as *al-walī*, 'the friend'. But that is not all. Hardly had he returned from Tunis than he set to writing a small treatise addressed to the companions of Mahdāwī and in particular to his own cousin Abū l-Ḥusayn b. al-ʿArabī, who was also a disciple of Mahdawī. This text, which has been recently published, contains a section devoted to enumerating the merits (*manāqib*) of Shaikh Mahdawī.[32] In addition, Ibn ʿArabī announces to his reader that he intends to write an independent work devoted entirely to the virtues (*faḍā'il*) of the Tunisian master.[33] And finally, in the passage from the prologue to the *Futūḥāt* which was mentioned earlier Ibn ʿArabī declares with regard to Mahdawī, his servant Ibn al-Murābiṭ, himself and Ḥabashī, 'We were the four corner supports (*arkān*)'—an obvious allusion to the four Pillars (*awtād*).[34] But admittedly it was a question here of Ibn ʿArabī's second stay in Tunis, eight years later.

590/1194 was the year that began a long period of wandering for Ibn ʿArabī in three-dimensional space. But it was also, and above all, the year of his simultaneous entry into what he calls 'God's Vast Earth' (*arḍ Allāh al-wāsiʿa*, Qur'ān 4:97) and the 'Realm of Symbols' (*manzil al-rumūz*). He states that he entered this 'Vast Earth'—a land which no geographer will ever be able to map—in his thirtieth year, and that from then onwards he never left and never would leave it. Sometimes he also refers to it as the 'Earth of Reality' (*arḍ al-ḥaqīqa*), and he devoted the whole of chapter eight of the *Futūḥāt* to it.[35] It must be said that the idea of a world where 'spirits are

31. Cf. the *Risāla*, published without a title in *Alif* 5, pp.7–38; the passage referring to Kinānī occurs on p.30. Later we will look at this work in greater detail.

32. *Risāla*, published by A. Taher in *Alif* 5, pp.29–32. For the true title of this *Risāla* see below, chapter 5.

33. This work is no doubt § 119 in O. Yahia's R.G., entitled *Faḍā'il al-shaykh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Mahdawī*.

34. *Fut.*, I, p.10; in this passage Ibn ʿArabī is describing his second stay at Tunis in 598.

35. *Fut.*, I, pp.126–31. Ibn ʿArabī also wrote a work specifically on the subject of the *arḍ al-ḥaqīqa*: cf. R.G. § 40 and *Fut.*, I, p.131.

corporealised and bodies spiritualised' is not unique to Ibn ᶜArabī. We find it referred to by various names in earlier writers, and even in pre-Islamic traditions.[36] Henry Corbin, in an important work which he devoted specifically to this subject,[37] has brought together a number of sources of information and both translated and analysed texts written by several authors—including chapter 8 of the *Futūḥāt*. It will therefore be sufficient here just to sum up the essential details mentioned in this lengthy passage, while at the same time rounding them off with some further details taken from chapter 351 of the *Futūḥāt*—a source Corbin failed to make use of.

The Earth of Reality, Ibn ᶜArabī explains at the start of chapter 8, came into being 'out of the surplus of clay from which Adam was created'; it is imperishable and immutable (*bāqiya lā tafnā wa lā tatabaddalu*). Everything that dwells in it possesses life and speech (*ḥayy nāṭiq*). Gnostics enter it in their spirit, not their body; in other words they leave their carnal envelope in this lower world. The earth in question is located in the *barzakh*—the intermediary world where spirits receive a subtle body. As Ibn ᶜArabī writes: 'Every body in which spirits, angels and *jinns* clothe themselves and every form in which a man perceives himself while asleep is a subtle body belonging to that earth'.[38]

In chapter 351 Ibn ᶜArabī reveals a completely different aspect of this spiritual Earth: it is the Earth of those who have realised total servitude (*ᶜubūdiyya*) with regard to God. 'Servitude is complete and pure submission, in conformity with the very essence of the servant's nature (*dhātiyya li l-ᶜabd*) . . .. It is only realised by those who inhabit God's Vast Earth, which contains both the contingent (*ḥudūth*) and the eternal (*qidam*). This is the Earth of God; whoever dwells there has realised true servitude with regard to God, and God joins that person to Himself, because He has said, "You My servants who believe, My Earth is vast, therefore worship Me" (Qur'ān 29:57), alluding in these words to the Earth of which I am speaking. *I myself have been worshipping God in this place ever since the year 590, and we are now in the year 635.* This Earth is imperishable and immutable; that is why God has made it the abode of His servants and the place of His worship . . .. It is a spiritual Earth, intelligible and not of the senses (*hiya arḍ maᶜnawiyya, maᶜqūla ghayr maḥsūsa*) . . ..'[39]

36. The idea of another earth already occurs in traditions concerning the mountain Qāf and the cities of Jabalqa and Jabarsa. Cf. Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, trans. H. Zotenberg, *De la création à David*, Paris 1984, pp.42–3. The idea is also found in Mazdean tradition: cf. Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* (trans. N. Pearson, Princeton 1977), pp.3–105.

37. See previous note.

38. *Fut.*, I, p.130.

39. *Fut.*, III, p.224.

Another passage from the *Futūḥāt* allows us to conclude that the event in question here occurred in Tunis, at the same time as Ibn ᶜArabī gained access to the Dwelling-Place of Symbols. 'This Dwelling-Place itself consists of a number of different Dwelling-Places, such as the Abode of Unity (*manzil al-waḥdāniyya*), the Abode of the First Intellect, the Abode of the Sublime Throne . . . and the Abode of the Vast Earth. When I entered this Dwelling-Place, while staying in Tunis, I unconsciously let out a cry; not a single person heard it without losing consciousness. The women who were on the adjoining terraces fainted; some of them fell from the terraces into the courtyard, but in spite of the height they suffered no harm. I was the first to regain consciousness; we were in the course of performing the prayer behind the imām. I saw that everyone had collapsed, thunderstruck. After a while they recovered their own spirits and I asked them: "What happened to you?" They answered: "It's for you to tell us what happened to you! You let out such a cry that you have been the cause of what you see". I said to them: "By God, I had no idea I uttered a cry!".'[40]

As we can see, Tunis was an important stage in Ibn ᶜArabī's journey. On the one hand it was during this prolonged stay in the city that he gained access to the Earth of Reality and in doing so 'realised' the state of total servitude. On the other hand, through his companionship with Kinānī and Mahdawī for a period of almost a year his spiritual and doctrinal education was completed. But that is not all. In his huge *Dīwān* Ibn ᶜArabī states that it was in Tunis, in the year 590, that he came to know he was the Heir of Muḥammadan knowledge:

> 'Without any doubt at all I am the Heir of the knowledge of Muḥammad
> And of his state, both secretly and manifestly.
> I came to know this in the town of Tunis
> Through a divine command I received during the invocation (*dhikr*).
> This happened to me in 590 . . ..'[41]

It was possibly during the course of this spiritual event that those verses came to his lips which were to scandalise Mahdawī and his disciples: 'I am the Qur'ān and the Seven Substitutes'. At any rate it seems clear that the 'revelation' in Tunis concerning his status as *wārith*, or Muḥammadan Heir, was linked with his entry into the Vast Earth of God.

40. *Fut.*, I, p.173.

41. *Dīwān*, p.332; the rest of the verse is incomprehensible. We will come back later to the significance of this event.

'In every epoch there is one unique being thanks to whom that age attains its apotheosis.
I am that being, through to the end of time.'

'There is in fact no-one who to my knowledge has realised the station of servitude (*maqām al-ᶜubūdiyya*) better than I have, and if such a being exists he can scarcely be more than my equal because I have attained to the plenitude of servitude. I am the Pure and Authentic Servant; I have not the slightest aspiration to sovereignty (*rubūbiyya*).'[42]

On his return to Andalusia in the same year, 590/1194, Ibn ᶜArabī was no longer the same person. Thirty years old, he had attained to his spiritual maturity and from this time onwards was capable in turn of training and teaching others. And yet his teaching was not simply destined for a few disciples gathered around him. The 'Muḥammadan Heir' was to address himself 'to all nations' thanks to a monumental corpus of writings, and to this period are to be dated the first texts in a long series of works which he was to continue writing until he died.

HEIR TO ABRAHAM

On his return to Andalusia Ibn ᶜArabī set sail from Qaṣr Maṣmūda,[43] the Moroccan port more commonly known as Ksar;[44] situated on the southern shore of the Strait of Gibraltar some twenty kilometres to the west of Ceuta, it was linked with the port of Tarifa in Spain. In the middle of the night, as Ibn ᶜArabī tells us in the *Durra*, he boarded a boat at Ksar to go and visit Shaikh ᶜAbd Allāh b. Ibrāhīm al-Mālaqī[45] who lived in Tarifa. This Sufi—just like Shaikh Ibn Ṭarīf, with whom he was on close terms—was a disciple of Abū l-Rabīᶜ al-Mālaqī, and he was famous for his *futuwwa*, or 'heroic generosity'. According to Ibn ᶜArabī's description of him in the *Rūḥ*, 'He was always to be seen busying himself on someone else's behalf—never for himself. He went to see governors and judges for the sake of other people's affairs, and his house was always open to the poor'.[46]

From Tarifa, Ibn ᶜArabī continued on his journey until he came to Seville. There a strange thing happened to him. Before leaving the Maghreb, while he

42. *Fut.*, III, p.41.
43. *Durra*, § 26; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.131.
44. It was also called al-Qaṣr al-ṣaghīr to distinguish it from al-Qaṣr al-kabīr: cf. *EI*² s.v. Qaṣr al-ṣaghīr.
45. *Durra*, § 26, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.131.
46. *Rūḥ*, § 26, p.120; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.129.

was still in Tunis he had one day mentally composed a poem inspired by the sight of the Great Mosque (no doubt the Zaytūna mosque) and more specifically by the *maqṣūra* of Ibn Muthannā. Ibn ᶜArabī had recited the verses to himself and for himself alone; they could not possibly have been known to anyone else—or at least so he thought. On his return to Seville he encountered a young man he had never seen before who recited to him word for word the poem he had composed in Tunis. Ibn ᶜArabī did not conceal his amazement. 'I had not recited it to anybody! I asked him who had composed these verses, and he replied that their author was Muḥammad b. al-ᶜArabī. Then I asked him: "When did you learn them?" In spite of the long distance [between Tunis and Seville] he gave me the exact date on which I had composed them. "And who taught them to you?" He answered: "One evening I was in the eastern quarter of Seville, by the roadside together with a group of companions, when a stranger we didn't know who looked like pilgrims (*sayyāḥ*) do passed close by us and came over to join our group. He talked with us for a bit and then recited these verses. As we found them pleasing we noted them down. We then asked him who had written them and he replied: 'So-and-so' (he told them my name). After that we pointed out to this man that we had no knowledge of any *maqṣūra* of Ibn Muthannā in our own town. He replied: 'It stands beside the Great Mosque in Tunis; that is where he has composed them—at this very instant!' He then disappeared, and we were unable to understand who exactly he was or how he had managed to vanish right in front of our eyes . . .." This happened in 590, and we are now in the year 635.'[47]

Ibn ᶜArabī explains that this invisible person who had so indiscreetly listened in on his monologue was one of the men of 'the Hidden World' (*rijāl al-ghayb*) who have the ability to listen to men without their being aware of the fact—regardless of whether they are talking at the top of their voice or silently within themselves—and then divulge whatever they happen to hear. It should, however, be pointed out that although Ibn ᶜArabī sometimes used the expression *rijāl al-ghayb* very loosely—as is very common in Islam—he also gave it a more technical sense, applying it to one specific category of saints to whom he devotes a lengthy passage in the vast inventory he compiled at the start of the second volume of the *Futūḥāt*. 'There are never more than ten of them; they are men of fear (*khushūᶜ*) and never speak except in a murmur (*hamsan*), because they are overpowered by the epiphany of the Merciful . . .. They are the Hidden Ones (*al-mastūrūn*) and the unknown; God has hidden them in His earth and in His heaven. They speak only to Him, and contemplate nothing besides Him; "they walk on the tips of their toes

47. *Fut.*, III, 338–39.

(*hawnan*) and when they are troubled by the ignorant their answer is 'Peace' " (Qur'ān 25:63).'[48] However, he adds further on that Sufis also apply the same expression *rijāl al-ghayb* in its broader sense to men who avoid being seen (such as in the case of Ibn ᶜArabī's mysterious companion in the story told earlier on), also to pious and believing *jinns*, and finally to beings who derive their knowledge and their sustenance from the invisible world, *al-ghayb*.

Shortly after Ibn ᶜArabi returned to Andalusia his father died, leaving two daughters still unwed. The *Risāla* mentioned earlier, addressed by Ibn ᶜArabī to his cousin, enables us to date his father's death with a fair degree of accuracy. In it he writes: 'Among the merits [of Shaikh Mahdawī] I will also mention the following. He sent for me one evening to ask me to accompany him to the baths (*ḥammām*), which was something I enjoyed very much. Among us that night was Shaikh Abū Muḥammad Jarrāḥ (God have mercy upon him!)—a devout hermit who was the warden of the port, which is where he was eventually buried. When we arrived at the *ḥammām* [Shaikh Mahdawī] placed some towels in front of him and called the disciples up one by one. He covered each of them with two towels—one around their torso, the other around their waist—so that he could then undress them. When he had finished he did the same for me and for himself. He had used very long towels so as to hide our nakedness the better. We spent an excellent night in the shaikh's company and in the best possible state "in a garden whose fruits will soon be ready" (Qur'ān 69:23), until the first third of the night had come to an end. We then went to his house and everyone performed their prayers (*awrād*) until the break of dawn. [In the morning] my father—may God have mercy upon him!—asked me: "What happened with the shaikh in the *ḥammām*?" I told him what had happened; he was surprised and condemned behaviour of such a kind in these times and in this country.'[49]

The *taraḥḥum* formula, 'may God have mercy upon him!', is traditionally spoken when referring to the dead; Ibn ᶜArabī's use of it here on mentioning his father indicates that at the time of writing this *Risāla*—namely on his return from Tunis in 590/1194—his father had already died. On the other hand, this same text also reveals that his father was with him in Tunis in 590 at the time of the *ḥammām* incident. Furthermore, it is very probable that his father died in Seville, because we know from elsewhere that he spent his final moments in the company of his wife and two daughters.[50] From these various pieces of evidence we can conclude that Ibn ᶜArabī's father died in 590/1194, some time after they had been together in Tunis but before Ibn ᶜArabī sat down to write the letter to his cousin on his return to Seville.

48. *Fut.*, II, p.11. 49. *Risāla*, in *Alif*, § 5, p.30. 50. *Fut.*, I, p.222.

One point about which there is no doubt is that his father's death—which was apparently followed shortly afterwards by the death of his mother[51]—was to turn Muḥyī l-Dīn's so far calm and peaceful existence upside down. An only son, he found himself head of the family, and from now on the duty of providing for his two sisters fell upon him.[52] However, as we have seen, the young shaikh had made a vow of poverty. It was already a number of years since he had stripped himself of all his possessions, leaving it to God to care for meeting his needs. Asceticism of this kind was hard to reconcile with his new responsibilities. His family circle realised this immediately, and put pressure on him to return to the world and renounce the Path. Everyone individually contributed their own advice, and everyone together begged him to put an end to his eccentricities and start shouldering his responsibilities in the proper way.

These tests did not catch Ibn ᶜArabī unprepared: years earlier he had been warned about them by his master, Shaikh Ṣāliḥ al-Barbarī. In his own words: 'At this period I had only just started to follow the Way,[53] and I had received certain instructions of a spiritual nature which I had confided to nobody. The shaikh [al-Barbarī] said to me: "My son, *when you have tasted honey leave the vinegar*! God has opened the Way to you, you must hold to it with resolution. How many sisters do you have?" I told him I had two. "Are they married?" I replied that they were not yet married but that the elder of the two had been promised to the emir Abū l-ᶜAlā' b. Ghāzūn. "My child, know that this marriage will not take place. Your father and the man whom you speak of will die, and you will be left alone to look after your mother and sisters. Your family will try to persuade you to return to the world so as to take care of them. Don't do what they ask you, and pay no attention to their words . . .. If you listen to them, you will be abandoned in both this world and the other, and left to yourself" '.[54]

It was only some time later that the full significance of Shaikh Barbarī's warning dawned on Ibn ᶜArabī, during a retreat in Seville in the course of which he became the recipient of the Abrahamic heritage. '. . . On the same night of this retreat I received the illumination (*fatḥ*) corresponding to the *dhikr* I was practising. Its light revealed to me what had so far been hidden from me. Next this revealing light was eclipsed and I said to myself: "This is the contemplative vision of Abraham" (*hādhā mashhadun khalī-*

51. *Durra*, § 3, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.75.

52. As already mentioned, the names of his two sisters were Umm Saᶜd and Umm ᶜAlā'. Cf. *Kitāb al-kutub*, p.36, in *Rasā'il; Kitāb al-mubashshirāt*, MS. Bayazid, 1636, f° 62b.

53. This indicates that the incident in question probably occurred in or around 580H.

54. *Durra*, § 3, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.74–5.

liyyun). I then knew that from this time onwards I was the Heir (*wārith*) of the community (*umma*) which God had commanded both us and His Messenger to follow in His utterance: "The community of your father Abraham; it is he who has called you *muslimīn*" (Qur'ān 22:78). I realised his quality of father (*ubuwwatahu*) and my quality of son (*bunuwwatī*). My master Ṣāliḥ al-Barbarī had said to me at Seville: "My child, beware of *tasting vinegar after tasting honey*!" I now understood what he meant.'[55]

In line with Ibn ᶜArabī's notion of *wirātha* or inheritance, as it was explained earlier, to 'inherit' from the prophet Abraham means to realise the mode of contemplation of the Divine Presence that is unique to him. But it also means becoming endowed with the character traits that define his particular spiritual type as described in the revelation of the Qur'ān, which emphasises his clemency and compassion. Muḥyī l-Dīn was to receive confirmation of this many years later during his stay in the *ḥaram* or sacred precinct at Mecca, when he was in the process of composing a chapter of the *Futūḥāt* in front of the *maqām Ibrāhīm*, or 'station of Abraham'. Traditionally this term *maqām* ('station') refers to the stone Abraham climbed onto to help his son construct the Kaᶜba; but here, as we will see, it is given a deeper meaning. 'Know that while I was in the process of writing these lines, near to the *maqām Ibrāhīm*, . . . I was overcome by sleep and I heard one of the spirits of the Supreme Pleroma announce to me on God's behalf: "Enter into the *maqām Ibrāhīm*"—a *maqām* which for him consisted of being compassionate (*awwāh*) and clement (*ḥalīm*). Then he recited to me the verse, "Certainly, Abraham is compassionate and clement" (Qur'ān 9:114). I then understood that God would necessarily give me the strength which accompanies clemency, because one can only manifest clemency in relation to the person one dominates. I also knew that God was sure to test me by means of slanderous accusations that would be spoken against me by people towards whom I would be obliged to show clemency even though I had power over them, and that I would be heavily afflicted, because God used the word *ḥalīm*, which is the form of the intensive. Furthermore, Abraham has been described as *awwāh*, which is a word that strictly applies to someone who sighs a great deal because of his perception of the Divine Majesty and because of his powerlessness to render glory to that Majesty. For a contingent being is incapable of exalting and glorifying the Divine Majesty as It deserves.'[56]

Shaikh Barbarī had seen correctly. Some time after he had given his warning, the emir who had been promised to Ibn ᶜArabī's sister died. His

55. *Fut.*, III, p.488. 56. *Fut.*, I, p.722.

death was followed a few years later by the death of Ibn ᶜArabī's father in 590/1194. In Ibn ᶜArabī's own words: 'The time arrived when my family came looking for me to reproach me for failing to look after my sister's needs. Next my cousin came to see me, and with much thoughtfulness and consideration begged me to return to the world for the good of my family'.[57]

Ibn ᶜArabī had not forgotten Shaikh Barbarī's words, and refused to yield. For him there was no question of changing his mode of existence or renouncing *siyāḥa*: those long periods of wandering across Andalusia, far from the great cities and the crowds. As he was to write later in the *Futūḥāt*: '*siyāḥa* consists of travelling across the earth to meditate on the spectacle of the vestiges of centuries gone by and nations that have passed away'.[58] To a certain extent it is true to say that for the greatest part of his life—that is, up until the time when he settled permanently in Damascus—Ibn ᶜArabī never stopped practising *siyāḥa*, firstly in the West and then in the East. In his case at least, these wanderings were also made for the purpose of meeting the saints of his time so as to profit from their *baraka* and their knowledge, and for the purpose of gaining first-hand acquaintance with the various categories of spiritual men whom he was subsequently to describe in his writings so vividly.

As we saw earlier, one of these periods of wandering brought him into the company of one of the seven *abdāl*: Ashraf al-Rundī. This time, in 590/1194, they led him to his third encounter with Khaḍir and to a meeting with a man whose rank was even higher. 'Some time later [i.e. after the second encounter with Khaḍir in Tunis] I set off on a journey along the coast in the company of a man who denied the miraculous power of the saints. I stopped off in a ruined mosque to perform the midday prayer together with my companion. At the same moment a group of those who wander remote from the world entered the mosque with the same intention of performing the prayer. Among them was the man who had spoken to me at sea and whom I had been told was Khaḍir; there was also another man of a high rank who was hierarchically superior to Khaḍir (*akbar minhu manzilatan*). I had already met him previously, and we had become bound by ties of friendship. I got up and went to greet him; he greeted me in turn and expressed his joy at seeing me, then he moved forward to direct the prayer. After we had finished the prayer the imām started to leave; I followed him as he moved towards the door of the mosque, which faced to the west and looked out over the ocean in the direction of a place called Bakka.[59] I had just started talking with him at the

57. *Durra*, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.75.
58. *Fut.*, II, p.33.
59. No doubt the reference is to Wādī Lago (nowadays Rio Barbate), a place mentioned by

door to the mosque when the man whom I said was Khaḍir took a small prayer rug which was stored in the *miḥrāb*, stretched it out in the air seven cubits above the ground and got onto it to perform the supererogatory prayers. I said to my travelling companion: "Do you see that man and what he is doing?" He asked me to go over and question him, so I left my companion and went over to see Khaḍir. When he had finished his prayers I greeted him and recited some verses to him . . .. He said to me: "I only did this for the sake of that unbeliever!", and he pointed to my companion who denied the miracles of the saints and, sitting in a corner of the mosque, was watching us . . .. We then left for Rota.'[60]

So who was this person who was superior to Khaḍir, whom Ibn ᶜArabī had already met and with whom he had forged bonds of friendship? He must surely have been either the Pole (*quṭb*) or one of the two Imāms who are hierarchically superior to Khaḍir, the fourth *watad* or 'pillar'. (Naturally the question of superiority only arises with regard to the *function* performed; as far as the actual spiritual level of the *afrād* or 'solitary ones'—and that includes the 'pillars'—is concerned, they are equal to the Pole.) Perhaps then we should read this account in the light of another passage in the *Futūḥāt*[61] where Ibn ᶜArabī declares that during the course of his wanderings (*fī baᶜḍi siyāḥātī*) he had met and seen with his own eyes[62] the Imām of the Right, who among his other duties is responsible for training the *afrād*.

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In spite of his prolonged absences and in spite of the family tensions that affected him Muḥyī l-Dīn found the time to compose two treatises during the months following his return from Tunis. These writings from the period of his youth are the *Kitāb mashāhid al-asrār al-qudsiyya* ('The book of the contemplations of the most holy secrets') and the *risāla* addressed to the companions of Mahdawī which has already been referred to a number of times in the past few pages. This *risāla*, edited and published without any title

Arab geographers as being close to Wādī Bakka or Wādī Lakka: the famous battle which decided the fate of Spain in 92/711 was fought just offshore from it. The precise orthography and location of the place have given rise to a whole controversy: cf. Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*, I, pp.20–21 and, for Wādī Bakka, Dozy, *Recherche*, I, pp.305–7. If this is the place in question Ibn ᶜArabī was very roughly half-way between Tarifa and Rota, which was indeed the town he was heading for.

60. *Fut.*, I, p.186.

61. *Fut.*, II, p.572.

62. Ibn ᶜArabī uses the verb *ᶜāyana* to describe his meeting in physical mode with the Imām of the Right, and to distinguish it from his meeting in subtle mode (*fī mashhad barzakhī*) with the Imām of the Left.

by Dr. Taher in 1985 from one rather late manuscript, would seem at first glance to correspond to numbers 625 and 626 in Osman Yahia's General Repertory. In other words it is a case of one and the same work known under different titles, composed—as Ibn ᶜArabī states at the start of the text—in 590/1194 on his return from Tunis for the benefit of Mahdawī's companions, and more specifically for his cousin Abū l-Ḥusayn b. ᶜArabī. From the point of view of the themes discussed in it and the ideas it develops, this *risāla* seems also to be identical to number 632 in the General Repertory, which is entitled *al-Risāla fī l-nubuwwa wa l-walāya*. To simplify matters I will give the text published by Dr. Taher the title *Risāla fī l-walāya*, because *walāya* or sainthood is its chief subject as well.

But here things become complicated. In his descriptive comments on the *Kitāb mashāhid al-asrār* (number 432 in his Repertory), O.Yahia notes on the basis of Ibn ᶜArabī's own statement in the preface to the treatise that it too was written in 590, for Mahdawī's companions and in particular for his cousin. In other words, every point of detail here is identical to what we find stated at the start of the *Risāla fī l-walāya*. Is this just a coincidence? Before accepting such a convenient solution to the problem we need to examine the facts a little more closely. To begin with, one notes that in the *Mashāhid* Ibn ᶜArabī refers to his *Tadbīrāt ilāhiyya*, to the *Kitāb lawāmiᶜ al-anwār* and to the *Kitāb al-ḥikma* by Ibn Barrajān—three works which are also referred to in the *Risāla*. And that is not all. In the preface to the *Mashāhid* Ibn ᶜArabī announces his intention of devoting a work to Shaikh Mahdawī's merits (*manāqib*); as was mentioned earlier, we find the same plan laid out in the *Risāla fī l-walāya*. Finally, although the editor of the text seems not to have been aware of the fact, the last pages of the *Risāla* are directly and very obviously related to the *Mashāhid*. In the pages in question[63] Ibn ᶜArabī justifies his use of expressions which are liable to scandalise the reader, such as *'qāla lī al-ḥaqq'* ('God said to me'), *'qultu lahu'* ('I replied to Him') or *'ashhadanī al-ḥaqq'* ('God made me contemplate'). These expressions never occur in the *Risāla fī l-walāya*, and yet they are virtual leitmotifs featuring on every page of the *Mashāhid*. Furthermore, Ibn ᶜArabī specifies that by expressing himself in this way he is simply imitating some of his predecessors such as the author of the *Mawāqif (ṣāḥib al-mawāqif)*, Niffarī (*d.* 354/965).[64] But while the structure of the *Kitāb mashāhid* is certainly reminiscent of the structure of Niffarī's *Mawāqif*, the same can hardly be said of the *Risāla*. In other words far more is involved here than mere coincidences.

What are we to deduce from all these details? Two hypotheses present

63. *Risāla fī l-walāya*, pp.32–4.

64. Ibid., p.35.

themselves. Firstly, the *Kitāb mashāhid al-asrār* and the *Risāla fī l-walāya* are two distinct and independent works composed in the same circumstances and (hardly an impossible situation) addressed to the same individuals. In this case the *Risāla* in the form in which it has been published would be a mutilated text to which a copyist inadvertently and rather ill-advisedly added some extracts from the *Kitāb mashāhid al-asrār*. The second hypothesis is that initially the *Risāla fī l-walāya* and the *Kitāb mashāhid al-asrār* formed one and the same work, with the *Risāla* serving as a kind of preface to it. Two factors allow us to conclude that this second hypothesis is the correct one. First of all, comparison shows that the first thirteen folios of the manuscript of the *Kitāb mashāhid al-asrār*[65] are identical to the published text of the *Risāla fī l-walāya*. And secondly, we happen to possess the decisive testimony of Ismāʿīl b. Sawdakīn who—under the supervision and dictation of his master—wrote a commentary on the *Kitāb al-isrā'* and *Kitāb mashāhid* entitled *Kitāb al-najāt . . . fī sharḥ . . . kitābay al-isrā' wa l-mashāhid*. This commentary, which is simply the transcription of verbal explanations provided by the author himself, establishes without the slightest doubt that our *Risāla fī l-walāya*—identical to the first thirteen folios of the manuscript of the *Kitāb al-mashāhid*—is indeed the preface to this treatise. At the beginning of the *Kitāb al-najāt* Ibn Sawdakīn explains that he did not consider it necessary to comment on the opening section of the *Mashāhid* because it is merely a 'preface (*muqaddima wa tamhīd*) containing some useful teachings regarding the virtues of Shaikh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Mahdawī; it is perfectly clear and transparent (*ẓāhir wa jalī*) and requires no explanation'.[66] Furthermore, an attentive reading of the *Risāla fī l-walāya* (that is, of the preface to the *Kitāb mashāhid al-asrār*) shows that in these pages Ibn ʿArabī was attempting to legitimise the very same things he would be saying further on in the text of the *Kitāb mashāhid*—things quite unacceptable to a rigid orthodoxy. So, in commenting on a statement attributed here to Shaikh Mahdawī ('The saints of this community are the prophets of the other communities'),[67] he evokes the divine inspiration bestowed on the saints as well as the divine secrets and

65. I am referring here to the only manuscript I have been able to consult: Bibliothèque Nationale 6104, ff^{os} 1–28b.

66. *Kitāb al-najāt min ḥujub al-ishtibāh fī sharḥ mushkil fawā'id min kitābay al-isrā' wa l-mashāhid* (ms. Fatih 5322, ff^{os} 169b-214), f^{o} 172a. In the preface Ibn Sawdakīn describes the circumstances which led to him writing this double commentary under Ibn ʿArabī's dictation (*imlā'an ʿan al-shaykh ʿalayya*).

67. In *Fut.*, I, p.223, Ibn ʿArabī cites this same statement as a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet. No *ḥadīth* of precisely the same form is to be found in the canonical collections, but it does occur in the variant form 'The learned are the heirs of the prophets'. Cf. Bukhārī, *ʿilm*, 10; Ibn Māja, *muqaddima*, 17.

knowledge with which they are favoured and which both induce and authorise them to express themselves in a manner usually reserved for the prophets because, as in the case of the prophets, they have become privileged in being able to speak with God. In the text of the *Kitāb mashāhid al-asrār* itself Ibn ʿArabī turns so to speak from words to action: in an allegorical style reminiscent of Niffarī's *Mawāqif* he describes a series of 'abodes of contemplation', each of which represents a face-to-face encounter with God.

At any rate, the *Kitāb mashāhid al-asrār* would seem not to have been the first of Ibn ʿArabī's writings because it contains a reference to another work—the *Kitāb al-tadbīrāt al-ilāhiyya*—which will necessarily have been written earlier, either before 590/1194 or in the same year. But here again things become complicated, and any attempt to arrive at a precise dating as the basis for a chronological classification of his works turns out to be a perilous enterprise. Ibn ʿArabī specifies at the start of the *Tadbīrāt* that he wrote this voluminous work in a period of four days, at Moron (*Mawrūr*)—a town not far from Seville—in Andalusia, and especially for Abū Muḥammad al-Mawrūrī.[68] He also refers in it to several other of his works—which will therefore already have been written at the time[69]—including the *Kitāb inshā' al-jadāwil*. However, if we turn to Osman Yahia's Répertoire Général we find that this same work (also known by the title *Inshā' al-dawā'ir*) was written in 598![70] Yahia bases his dating of the composition of the *Insha' al-dawā'ir* on a passage in the first volume of the *Futūḥāt*; but what exactly does Ibn ʿArabī say in the passage in question? Addressing himself to Shaikh Mahdawī he writes as follows: 'You already know [the chapter] on the cause of the beginning of creation (*sabab bad' al-ʿālam*) which is contained in my book called *al-ʿAnqā al-mughrib* . . . and in my book called *Inshā' al-dawā'ir, part of which* I wrote (*alladhī allafnā baʿḍahu*) at your home during my visit in 598 . . . . I took it with me to Mecca to finish it off but this book [i.e. the *Futūḥāt*] prevented me'.[71] Furthermore, at the start of the *Inshā' al-dawā'ir* the author specifies that he has written the work for 'Abd Allāh Badr al-Ḥabashī; and yet we only see this companion of Ibn ʿArabī's first appearing in his life in the year 594/1198, at Fez.

All this gives us grounds to suppose that, if it is true that in some instances

68. *Tadbīrāt ilāhiyya*, ed. Nyberg, p.120.

69. The treatises in question are the *Kitāb jalā' al-qulūb*, *Manāhij al-irtiqā'*, *al-Muthalathāt* (three texts which have apparently disappeared: cf. O. Yahia, Répertoire Général § 5), the *Kashf al-maʿnā* . . . (unpublished, but manuscripts of it survive: Répertoire Général § 338), and the *Kitāb maṭāliʿ al-anwār al-ilāhiyya*—a title that is strangely reminiscent of the full title of the *Mashāhid*, which is *Kitāb mashāhid al-asrār al-qudsiyya wa maṭāliʿ al-anwār al-ilāhiyya*.

70. O. Yahia, Répertoire Général § 289.

71. *Fut.*, I, p.98.

Ibn ᶜArabī composed his works 'all of a piece' and over a short period of time,[72] there were also other instances where—on the contrary—the composition stretched out over a period of several years, thereby explaining the sometimes contradictory chronological allusions which we often encounter. What is more, even in the first case (the case of works completed in a single sitting) we see Ibn ᶜArabī returning to and amending texts years afterwards; this was the case for example with the *Mawāqiᶜ al-nujūm*, as we will see later. In these circumstances it is quite impossible to assign a precise date to the actual commencement of his activity as an author, or to determine which of the works that can safely be ascribed to the period of his youth was the first to be completed in its entirety. Until further notice, as it were, the best we can do is to take stock of the various pieces of information that all seem to point to the same conclusion, which is that the period of his thirtieth year was a decisive time: a time when his spiritual magistracy began to manifest itself externally and also the time when the enormous literary production which he has bequeathed to us began—apparently in a very rapid rhythm. We find in these early works all the major themes which much later on were to be organised and synthesised in the *Futūḥāt*, already conveyed with an authority deriving from a vast learning but above all from a wealth of inner experience.

The little that we know about the person to whom the *Tadbīrāt* were addressed illustrates once again the ambivalence of Ibn ᶜArabī's relationship to the Sufis he knew. A disciple of Ibn Saydabūn, of Shams Umm al-Fuqarā' and above all of Abū Madyan (who greatly admired him), Mawrūrī was perhaps himself one of Ibn ᶜArabī's teachers. However, it is difficult to be certain about the matter because the references to him are in this respect contradictory. According to the story in the *Futūḥāt*,[73] Mawrūrī became the *disciple* of Ibn ᶜArabī because one day he had had a vision of his dead brother who said to him, 'Only he who knows his Lord can see Him'. 'So', Ibn ᶜArabī writes, 'he came to visit me in Seville and told me his vision. He then explained to me that he had come to see me because he wanted me to give him the knowledge of God. He stayed in my company until he knew God as far as it is possible for a contingent being to know Him.' In this passage Ibn ᶜArabī refers to Mawrūrī as '*ṣāḥibunā*', 'our companion'. However, in the same volume of the *Futūḥāt*, in a chapter concerned with the Poles and their stations,[74] the Shaikh al-Akbar relates how he saw in a dream that the Pole of

72. This was the case not only with the *Tadbīrāt*, completed in four days, but also with several other treatises such as the *Kitāb al-yaqīn*, which was written in 601 at Hebron in only one day (cf. R.G. § 834).

73. *Fut.*, IV, p.510. 74. *Fut.*, IV, p.76.

tawakkul, or abandonment to God, was ᶜAbd Allāh al-Mawrūrī, and that he met him and was his companion (*ᶜayantuhu wa ṣaḥibtuhu*). Similarly, in the *Durrat al-fākhira* he states again that for a period of time Mawrūrī kept *his* company,[75] but in the *Rūḥ* he states the opposite: 'I visited him and profited from his company' (*ᶜāshartuhu muᶜāsharatan wa intafaᶜtu bihi*).[76] Perhaps these apparently irreconcilable statements are to be understood as indicating that the relationship between Ibn ᶜArabī and Mawrūrī was similar for example to his relationship with Shaikh Abū Yaᶜqūb al-Kūmī, who was simultaneously his disciple and his master.

75. *Durra*, § 14, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.108.

76. *Rūḥ*, § 14, p.101; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.103. For Mawrūrī cf. also *Fut.*, I, p.666; IV, p.217; *Kitāb al-kutub*, p.9, in *Rasā'il; Kitāb al-isfār*, p.57, in *Rasā'il; Muḥāḍarat*, 1906, I, pp.110, 145, 173, 188, 199; II, pp.31, 148, 171, etc., where Mawrūrī tells Ibn ᶜArabī of visions of Abū Madyan addressing a gathering of great Sufi masters. One is bound to wonder whether the person who really experienced these immensely prolific visions of Abū Madyan was not Ibn ᶜArabī himself.

6. Fez

'MAKE ME INTO LIGHT'

WHILE Ibn ʿArabī—apparently indifferent to the rumblings of war—was devoting his time now to *siyāḥa* or wanderings, now to the composition of his works,[1] the population of Seville lived in the fear and distress caused by the repeated assaults from Castile. Once the truce signed in 586/1190 had expired, King Alfonso VIII decided to resume fighting against the Almohads; in 590/1194 he bathed the whole region of Seville in fire and blood.[2] Increasingly worried, the people of Seville sent emissaries to Marrakech to request help from the sultan. Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb immediately assembled his troops and marched towards Seville, arriving eventually on the 20th of Jumādā II 591/1195.[3]

When the Almohad reinforcements arrived in Seville Ibn ʿArabī himself happened to be in Morocco—in Fez, to be precise. 'I was in Fez in 591 when the Almohad armies disembarked in Andalusia to confront the enemy that was seriously threatening Islam. It was there that I encountered a man of God, one of my best friends, who asked me: "What do you think of this army? Will it win a victory this year?" I turned the question back on him: "What do you think yourself?" His answer was: "God has spoken about this battle, and He promised the Prophet victory in this very year. He mentioned it to him in the Book He revealed to him when He said: 'In truth We have given you a resounding victory' (Qur'ān 48:1). The good news is contained in those two

1. After the *Kitāb mashāhid al-asrār* and the *Risāla fī l-walāya* (if, that is, one insists on considering them separate works—which is hardly justified), written in 590. Ibn ʿArabī produced the *Kitāb tahdhīb al-akhlāq* in 591/1195 (cf. *Fut.*, IV, p.459; O.Yahia, R.G. § 745). The work published under this title at Cairo in 1328H is not by Ibn ʿArabī but by Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī (cf. the article by K.Samir in *Arabica* XXI.2, June 1974, pp.111–39 and XXXI.2, June 1979, 158–78).
2. Marrākushī, *Muʿjib*, p.205.
3. Bosch Vila, *Sevilla islámica*, p.167.

words, 'resounding victory' (*fatḥan mubīnan*). Examine carefully the sum total of the numerical value of the letters". I counted them up and found that the victory would indeed occur in 591. I had barely returned to Andalusia before God gave victory to the Muslims.'[4]

The Almohads certainly won the day. Approximately two months after their arrival in Seville, they annihilated the troops of Alphonso VIII at Alarcos[5] on 8 Shaʿbān 591/1195: a date the Castilans were not easily to forget. There is no doubt that the Arab chroniclers exaggerated the importance of the victory, which did not exactly change the course of history. However, from this time onwards Castile no longer dared measure itself against Yaʿqūb, and the Andalusians knew peace—at least for a few years.

'The town of Fez'—wrote Idrīsī (*d.* 560/1165)—'has many houses, many palaces and many trades. Her inhabitants are industrious, and their architecture—like their industry—has an air of nobility. There is a great abundance of all kinds of staples and provisions. Wheat in particular is cheaper there than in any neighbouring region. Fruit production is substantial. Everywhere one looks one sees fountains topped by cupolas, water reservoirs with arches and decorated with sculptures, and other beautiful things. The surrounding neighbourhoods are well supplied with water, which gushes in abundance from a number of springs and makes everything look green and fresh. Gardens and orchards are well cultivated, and the inhabitants are proud and independent.'[6] Apart from being an important commercial crossroads (thanks largely to its privileged geographical location), Fez was also an intellectual and religious centre which enjoyed considerable prestige—especially during the time of the Almohads. Poets and literati came from all parts of the Almohad Empire to practise their crafts; many *ʿulamā'* from Andalusia as well as the Maghreb met there to carry on their disputes. More discreetly and not quite so loudly, Sufis arrived in search of a master or so as to be able to do their practices in favourable surroundings. No doubt Ibn ʿArabī was one of them—unless we follow Dominique Urvoy in preferring to suppose that it was the 'instinct to flee' which drove the young shaikh to leave Andalusia for Fez at exactly the same time that Castile was threatening the impending destruction of Seville and the surrounding region. Urvoy speaks of Ibn ʿArabī in the following terms: 'While the instinct to flee seems to have been all that counted for him—returning to Andalusia when he thought victory over the Christians had been won but then leaving again

4. *Fut.*, IV, p.220.
5. For details about Alarcos cf. *EI*² s.v. *ʿArak*; Marrākushī, *Muʿjib*, pp.205–6.
6. Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-mushtāq*, trans. Dozy and de Goeje, pp.86–7; cf. also the translation by Hadj Sadok, *Le Maghrib au 12e siècle*, p.86.

when he realised he had been mistaken. . .'.[7] However, this interpretation of events would seem to be somewhat fragile. Firstly, the extract from the *Futūḥāt* quoted at the start of this chapter shows quite plainly that Ibn ʿArabī returned to Andalusia *before* the battle of Alarcos and its successful outcome for the Muslims—although according to what he himself says he admittedly knew about the Almohad triumph in advance. And secondly, he left Andalusia again in 593/1196, when the Christian threat had—at least provisionally—been removed, and returned in 595/1198. In fact it proves very difficult to establish any correlation between Ibn ʿArabī's journeys to the Maghreb and the course of historical events: between 589 and 597 he was continually crossing backwards and forwards across the Strait of Gibraltar. Instead, it would seem to have been the case that the reasons behind this particular departure for Fez were more of a domestic and spiritual nature. On the one hand, the journey gave Ibn ʿArabī the opportunity to escape for a while from the pressure his relatives were exerting on him to convince him to 'return to the world'. On the other hand, Fez was the citadel of Moroccan Sufism: it was there that Abū Madyan had chosen to pursue his training, and it was there that he had met his two masters, Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Daqqāq and Ibn Ḥirzihim (*d.* 559/1165). Certainly Ibn ʿArabī knew neither of these men himself, but it is very probable that he kept the company of their disciples and through them received their teaching orally. At the very least we do know that during his first stay in Fez he met the *muḥaddith* Muḥammad b. Qāsim b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Tamīmī al-Fāsī (*d.* 603/1206). According to Ibn Abbār—who expresses some reservations about his abilities as a transmitter (*rāwī*)[8]—Muḥammad b. Qāsim spent fifteen years in the East, where he met the famous Abū Ṭāhir al-Silafī (*d.* 578/1182). But this man was no ordinary *muḥaddith*. He was also a Sufi—one of those Sufis who were to transmit the *khirqa* to Ibn ʿArabī. Furthermore, he is noted not so much for transmitting *ḥadīth* to Ibn ʿArabī as for handing down to him traditions (*akhbār*) about the saints of Fez—especially about Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Daqqāq.[9] He left a record of these *akhbār* in one of his works, the *Kitāb al-mustafād fī dhikr al-ṣāliḥīn . . . fī madīnat*, which Ibn ʿArabī studied under his guidance.[10]

Ibn ʿArabī also formed friendships with two notorious Sufis, Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdawī (not to be confused with ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Mahdawī) and Ibn Tākhmīst. Regarding Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdawī, who died at Fez in 595/

7. D. Urvoy, *Le Monde des Ulémas andalous*, p.191.

8. *Tak.*, ed. Codera, § 1064. It will be remembered that Muḥammad b. Qāsim is mentioned in the list of teachers in Ibn ʿArabī's *Ijāza*, p.180.

9. Cf. e.g. *Fut.*, I, p.244; IV, p.503. For their encounter in 591/1195 see *Fut.*, IV, p.541.

10. *Fut.*, IV, p.503. Unfortunately this hagiographical work on the saints of Fez appears to have been lost: cf. the introduction by Aḥmad Tawfīq to Tādilī's *Tashawwuf*, pp.15–18.

1198, Tādilī tells us that he saved the population of the town from famine by distributing wheat to everyone, and that he spent forty years in the Great Mosque seated facing towards the *qibla*.[11] Ibn ʿArabī for his part confirms that Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdawī was one of the *malāmiyya*[12] and that he belonged to the spiritual category of 'men of ardent desire' (*ahl al-ishtiyāq*). These men—who are never more than five in number—are the men of the five obligatory prayers. 'Each of them fully realises one of the five obligatory prayers . . .. It is through them that God maintains the existence of the world. Their verse in the Book is: "Observe the prayers, and the middle prayer" (Qur'ān 2:238). They never cease praying, either during the night or during the day. Ṣāliḥ al-Barbarī, whom I knew and whose companion I was until the time of his death, was one of them, as was Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Mahdawī of Fez, whose companion I was as well'.[13] In addition, he notes in the *Rūḥ al-quds*[14] that for sixty years Mahdawī never turned his back to the *qibla*—a detail corroborated by the account in the *Tashawwuf*.

As for ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Takhmīst (*d.* 608/1211)—who according to Tādilī saved the passengers of a boat from shipwreck simply by his presence[15]—Ibn ʿArabī describes him too as being a *malāmī*, who was believed by his contemporaries to be one of the *abdāl* or 'substitutes'.[16]

During one of his stays in Fez—perhaps the one in 591—Ibn ʿArabī also met an eminent representative of *kalām*, or speculative theology, Ibn al-Kattānī (*d.* 597/1200),[17] and became involved in a debate with him over the divine attributes. This was a thorny issue, and one that led to a great deal of ink being spilt by Muslim theologians. Some denied the existence of divine attributes as distinct from the Divine Essence; others taught *tashbīh*, anthropomorphism; while yet others—the Ashʿarites—admitted the existence of divine attributes as distinct from the Divine Essence but held that these attributes possessed no reality apart from Essence. Ibn ʿArabī states his own position clearly at the beginning of the *Futūḥāt*. 'To say that God is Knowing, Living, Powerful and so forth: all this is a matter of relationships (*nisab*) and assignations (*iḍāfāt*) with regard to Him and not of distinct essences (*aʿyān zā'ida*), because that would amount to qualifying the Divine Essence with imperfection. Indeed whatever is perfect through the addition of something is imperfect in its essence with regard to the perfection deriving

11. *Tashawwuf*, § 168, pp.332–34. 12. *Fut.*, III, p.34. 13. *Fut.*, II, p.15.

14. *Rūḥ*, § 36, p.123; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.135.

15. *Tashawwuf*, § 213, pp.390–91.

16. *Rūḥ*, § 27, p.121; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.132; *Fut.*, III, pp.15, 34.

17. For this famous theologian cf. *Tak.*, ed. Codera, § 1062; *Tashawwuf*, § 165, p.335 and the introduction, p.16.

from this addition. But He is perfect in His very Essence. Consequently it is impossible to add something separate to His Essence, but it is not impossible to attribute to Him relationships and assignations. As for the person who declares that these attributes are not Him and yet at the same time are not other than Him—that is a totally mistaken assertion . . ..'[18] This last thesis was the one upheld by Muḥammad Ibn al-Kattānī. 'At Fez I saw Abū ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Kattānī, who was the representative in his time of the speculative theologians (*mutakallimūn*) in Morocco. One day he questioned me about the divine attributes. I gave him my opinion on the matter and then asked him what he thought: "Do you agree with the declared view of the *mutakallimūn*?" He replied: "I will tell you my opinion. As far as I and my colleagues are concerned it is impossible not to assert the existence of an adjunct (*zā'id*) to the Essence, which is called an attribute (*ṣifa*) . . .. However, we declare that this adjunct is not Him and yet is not something other than Him . . .". I replied to him: "Abū ʿAbd Allāh! I will say to you what the Messenger of God said to Abū Bakr about his interpretation of the dream: you are partly right, partly wrong!"'[19] . . . He was like someone whom God sends to his ruin in spite of his learning. That is not to call his faith into question—only his intelligence.'[20]

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In 591/1195 Fez—like Tunis and like every other city where he stayed for any length of time—became for Ibn ʿArabī a stage on which a number of visionary events were acted out; although they were not quite as decisive as the ones he was to experience there two years later, they are just as indicative of his spiritual progress. First of all, a passage in the *Futūḥāt* reveals that it was at Fez, in the year 591/1195, that he attained to the 'Abode of the pact between plants and the Pole';[21] he also explains that it was through reaching

18. *Fut.*, I, p.42. On the same topic see also the *Kitāb al-masā'il*, in *Rasā'il*, Hyderabad 1948, p.22.

19. Cf. Bukhārī, *Taʿbīr*, 47, *īmān*, 9.

20. *Fut.*, IV, p.22. There is an allusion here to Qur'ān 45:23. *Man aḍallahu llāh ʿalā ʿilm* is usually translated 'He whom God knowingly leads astray', but the commentators are divided over the meaning of *ʿalā ʿilm* and the translation I have offered above gives the sense which seems most compatible with the context. See also *Fut.*, I, p.319, III, p.8 and IV, p.80, where Ibn ʿArabī describes another debate he held with Ibn al-Kattānī regarding the knowledge 'dispensed' by God (*ʿilm mawhūb*). It is also worth noting that according to Tādilī (*Tashawwuf*, § 169, p.335) Ibn al-Kattānī was an ascetic (*zāhid*) as well.

21. *Fut.*, III, p.140. As we have seen, the Pole occupies the highest position in the spiritual hierarchy of initiation; he is the *khalīfat Allāh*, caliph of God, in the strict sense of the term. Ibn ʿArabī explains that some Poles possess both the temporal and the spiritual power associated with the title; according to him this was especially the case with the first four caliphs (*Fut.*, II, p.6). This means that the Pole's authority extends throughout the entire creation including the vegetable, mineral and animal kingdoms, which offer him their allegiance in the same way as those men who recognise him. Cf. *Kitāb manzil al-quṭb*, in *Rasā'il*, Hyderabad 1948.

22. *Fut.*, II, p.506.

this Abode that he knew in advance (and therefore not just on the basis of the arithmological considerations mentioned earlier) of the victory of the Almohads at Los Alarcos. This is because in the case of this 'Abode', as in the case of all the others, gaining access to it also entails gaining acquisition of a number of special sciences which are peculiar to it. Three of these sciences demand our particular attention: the 'science of the illumination of revelation' (*futūḥ al-mukāshafa*), the 'science of the illumination of sweetness' (*futūḥ al-ḥalāwa*), and the 'science of the illumination of expression' (*futūḥ al-ʿibāra*). At first sight these three notions appear extremely abstruse, and fully to understand what they mean we have to turn to chapter 216 of the *Futūḥāt* where Ibn ʿArabī describes and analyses the three types of illumination in question.

Ibn ʿArabī starts off by explaining 'the illumination of expression'. This 'is only given to the perfect Muḥammadan, even if in other respects he is the heir to another prophet. The most powerful station (*maqām*) obtained by the person who has received this illumination is the station of veracity (*ṣidq*) in all he says, in all his movements and in his state of repose . . .. Such a person is incapable of conceiving inwardly what he will say, then putting it into order by means of reflection and finally uttering it. For him, the moment in which he speaks is the same as the moment in which he conceives the discourse by means of which he expresses his thought . . .. Of all the men I have met throughout my life, I have not met one who showed any trace of this form of illumination. Nonetheless, it may be that such men exist and that I simply have not met them: but the one thing about which I am sure and certain is that I am one of them . . ..'[22]

From this passage we see that only the 'perfect Muḥammadan' obtains this illumination. Ibn ʿArabī also explains at the very start of the chapter that from this station of 'veracity' derives the *iʿjāz al-qur'ān*, the inimitability of the Qur'ān. 'I raised a question about this issue during the course of a vision. The reply that was given to me was: "[the *iʿjāz*] consists of your speaking only the truth (*ṣidq*) and nothing except what exists in reality (*amr wāqiʿ muḥaqqaq*) without adding so much as a particle, and without lying within yourself. If your discourse is of such a nature, then it is inimitable (*muʿjiz*)".' In the first volume of the *Futūḥāt* Ibn ʿArabī refers again to this vision but in terms that are more specific. 'I was asked during the course of a vision: "Do you know what the inimitability of the Qur'ān is?" "No", I replied. I was told: "It is the

fact that it communicates the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*). Observe the truth and your discourse will be inimitable".'[23] This is a particularly interesting detail when one bears in mind the immense importance Ibn ᶜArabī attached to the exact and literal transcription of divine and prophetic utterances.[24]

Ibn ᶜArabī continues: 'The second category of illumination is the illumination of inner sweetness (*fatḥ al-ḥalāwa fī l-bāṭin*) . . .. Even though it is spiritual (*maᶜnawiyya*), this sweetness is nonetheless perceptible in just the same way that one perceives the coldness of cold water . . .. Whoever experiences it feels a loosening of his limbs and joints and a kind of numbness . . .. This sweetness is of no fixed duration, and in my case its duration was variable. Sometimes it descended upon me while I was doing something or other and it lasted only an instant, but at other times it descended on me and persisted for days and nights before disappearing . . .'.[25]

'The third type of illumination is the illumination of revelation procured by knowledge of God in things. Know first of all that God is too great, too sublime to be known in Himself. But on the other hand He can be known in things . . .. In fact things are veils in relation to God; when they disappear, what is behind them is revealed. He who has revelation sees God in things just as the Prophet saw what was going on behind his back[26] . . .. I myself experienced this station (*maqām*), praise be to God! Furthermore, it is impossible to know God in things save through the manifestation of things and through the disappearance of their status. The eyes of the ordinary man stop at the status of things, whereas those who have the illumination of revelation see nothing in things but God. Among them there are those who see God in things, and there are others who see things and God in them . . .. The greatest illumination in this domain is when the vision of God is the very vision of the world (*yakūnu ᶜayn ru'yatihi iyyāhu ᶜayn ru'yatihi al-ᶜālam*) . . .. I have discovered no-one among the men of God who have dealt with the subject of this illumination before me who have noted this particular point.'[27]

This last paragraph calls for some explanatory comments, because it either explicitly or implicitly formulates several ideas which are fundamental to Ibn ᶜArabī's doctrine. The first notion which one notes immediately is that God *can only be known in things*, because according to Ibn ᶜArabī He can only be known in His capacity of *rabb* or lord of something; the Divine Essence is by its

23. *Fut.*, I, p.227.

24. In this connection see *Fut.*, I, pp.248, 403; IV, p.67.

25. *Fut.*, II, p.506.

26. This is a reference to the *ḥadīth*, 'I see you behind my back'. Cf. Bukhārī, *īmān*, 3; Muslim, *ṣalāt*, 110–11. Later we will look in more detail at this phenomenon, which Ibn ᶜArabī experienced at Fez in 593.

27. *Fut.*, II, pp.507–8.

very nature absolutely unknowable. The notion of *rabb*, as implied in the above passage, is one of the recurrent themes in the Shaikh al-Akbar's teaching. Every being—or, more generally speaking, every thing, because in his eyes everything is alive—is subsumed under the authority of a Divine Name which is its *rabb*, its own 'lord', and for which it provides the locus of its epiphany.[28] Consequently, according to Ibn ᶜArabī, all that each of us is ever capable of knowing of God is our own *rabb*, and this is one of the meanings he ascribes to the *ḥadīth* he so often comments on: 'He who knows himself knows his Lord' (*man ᶜarafa nafsahu ᶜarafa rabbahu*)—that is, the Divine Name which governs him.[29] But also—and this is a point of major importance—the knowledge of things necessarily precedes the knowledge of God. As Ibn ᶜArabī says in the same passage of the *Futūḥāt*: 'The goal is to know God in His capacity as Lord of the world, and this knowledge only becomes accessible once prior knowledge of the world has already been obtained. This is something that is understood by the most perfect among the men of God, and it is why the Messenger of God said, "He who knows himself knows his Lord". Also worth noting is the fact that the idea of 'God knowable in things' is implied in another idea which was particularly dear to Ibn ᶜArabī and is a correlate of the notion of *rabb*: the idea of *tajalliyāt* or 'self-disclosures'. It is because every single thing is the receptacle of theophanies that by seeing it one can see God.[30]

Finally, it will be noticed that Ibn ᶜArabī establishes a distinction between the person who only sees God in things and the person who sees things and God in them. These two standpoints correspond respectively to the perspective of the *wāqif*, the person who comes to a halt in the Divine Presence and from that time onwards knows and sees nothing but God,[31] and of the *rājiᶜ*, the person who has returned from God to created beings while remaining simultaneously present with God because he sees the Face of God in everything. According to Ibn ᶜArabī this second case is superior to the first. As he writes in another passage in the *Futūḥāt*: 'To be attentive to God and [simultaneously] to the created object forms part of the perfect acquisition [obtained by a man] of the Divine Names'.[32] However, there is another even

28. For the notion of *rabb* cf. e.g. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, pp.81, 119; Suᶜād al-Ḥakīm, *Muᶜjam*, § 283, pp.506–14; Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, pp.94, 120, 142, 149–52, etc.

29. For Ibn ᶜArabī's interpretation of this *ḥadīth* cf. M.Chodkiewicz's introduction to his translation of Balyānī, *Épître sur l'Unicité absolue*, pp.27–39.

30. For the notion of *tajalliyāt* (which we will come back to later) cf. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, pp.79, 81; Suᶜād al-Ḥakīm, *Muᶜjam*, § 117, pp.257ff; Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, pp.184–215.

31. This standpoint is exemplified by the *laysiyya*, those who deny the reality of the world: cf. Balyānī, *Épître*, introduction.

32. *Fut.*, IV, *Bāb al-asrār*; Balyānī, *Épître*, p.32.

higher stage: the stage where the 'vision of God is the very vision of the world'. The being who attains to this stage never ceases contemplating the multiple in the One and the One in the multiple.

It was also in 591, and very probably in Fez as well, that Ibn ʿArabī gained access for the first time to the 'Abode of Light', where he was instructed in the difference between sensible bodies (*ajsām*) and subtle bodies (*ajsād*). At the beginning of chapter 348 of the *Futūḥāt* he writes as follows: 'Know that this Abode is one of the Abodes of Unity and Light (*min manāzil al-tawḥīd wa l-anwār*). God granted me access to it *on two occasions*; it was in this Abode that I came to understand the difference between sensible and subtle bodies. Sensible bodies (*ajsām*) are what are known to ordinary men—regardless of whether they are fine and transparent or dense, visible or invisible. Subtle bodies (*ajsād*) are the bodies in which spirits manifest in the waking state [when one perceives them], in the form of sensible bodies (*ajsām*); and they are also the forms perceived by the sleeper in his sleep. They are similar to sensible bodies but are different from them'.[33]

In 593/1196 Ibn ʿArabī gained access to the Abode of Light for the second time—and, as we will see, in a most spectacular way. Without anticipating this second event, it is worth noting that the account given above would seem to need to be set alongside another passage from the *Futūḥāt* concerning the 'Abode of the Extinction of Sins' (*al-fanā' ʿan al-mukhālafāt*). Ibn ʿArabī explains that the people who experience this *fanā'*, or extinction, are of two kinds. 'On the one hand there are those whose sins (*maʿāṣī*) have not been pre-eternally decreed (*lam yuqdar ʿalayhim*). They only perform acts which are permitted (*mubāḥ*), even if they appear to commit acts of disobedience (*mukhālafāt*) which legally are designated in the community as sins (*maʿāṣī*) . . .. For they have been told in a way they were able to hear and understand: "Do what you wish, I have already forgiven you",[34] just as it was said to the fighters at Badr. For them, the status of acts of disobedience has been annihilated (*faniyat ʿanhum aḥkām al-mukhālafāt*) . . ..

'On the other hand there are those who have obtained knowledge of the secret of the pre-eternal decree (*sirr al-qadar*) . . .. They have seen what in the way of actions they have been destined to perform—inasmuch as these actions are actions, not inasmuch as they are of this or that status [i.e. are permitted or forbidden]. They have seen this in the Presence of the Pure Light

33. *Fut.*, III, p.186. Ibn ʿArabī specifies a little further on (p.187) that he gained access to this Abode in 591.

34. The reference is to a famous *ḥadīth qudsī* about those who fought at Badr. Cf. Bukhārī, *maghāzī*, 9, 46; Ibn Ḥanbal, I, p.80; II, p.296. One of the versions of this *ḥadīth* is recorded by Ibn ʿArabī in his *Mishkāt al-anwār* (§ 90).

(*ḥaḍrat al-nūr al-khāliṣ*) . . .. Below this Presence there are two other Presences: firstly the Presence of Half-Obscurity (*ṣadfa*) and secondly the Presence of Pure Obscurity (*al-ẓulma al-maḥḍa*). In the Presence of Half-Obscurity legal obligation (*taklīf*) has appeared, the Word has become divided into words and Good has become differentiated from Evil; but the Presence of Obscurity is the Presence of evil which contains no good . . ..

'So, when men belonging to this second category see what they see in the Presence of the Light, they hasten to commit all the actions which they know must issue from them; but in doing so they are "extinguished" to the status of closeness or distance which is [normally] implicit in these actions. From then onwards they obey and disobey without any intention either to come closer [to God] or to transgress the prohibitions . . ..

'It was this strange kind of extinction which God acquainted me with in Fez. I have seen nobody who has experienced it and yet I know that there are men who have experienced it; it is simply that I have not met them. However, in my case I saw the Presence of Light and the corresponding status but this contemplation did not exert its status upon me. In fact God raised me into the Presence of Half-Obscurity while at the same time He preserved me and rendered me impeccable (*ḥafiẓanī wa ʿaṣamanī*). Consequently, I have the status corresponding to the Presence of Light while remaining in the Presence of Half-Obscurity, and for the people of the Way this is more perfect.'[35]

In other words, according to Ibn ʿArabī's own statement he belonged to the second category of men who are preserved from committing sin and have gained knowledge in the Presence of Light of the *sirr al-qadar* or secret of the pre-eternal decree—that is, of their destiny. To grasp the full implications of this exceptional grace—of which he considered himself a privileged recipient—and the consequences liable to follow from it we need to turn to a passage in the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* which elucides the peculiar modalities of this knowledge of the *sirr al-qadar*. The passage in question occurs in the second chapter, where Ibn ʿArabī deals with the various sorts of divine gifts and the different attitudes adopted by men with regard to the favours dispensed by the Most High. He explains that there are those who formulate a request (either in a specific form or not) and there are those who abstain from doing so, and 'among these is the person who realises that the knowledge which God has of him in all his states is none other than the knowledge of what he was in the state of immutable essence (*fī ḥāl thubūt ʿaynihi*), prior to his existentiation . . .. This is the highest category of spiritual men and the one that is most perfect in revelation (*akshaf*). They are those who have gained knowledge of

35. *Fut.*, II, pp.512–13.

the secret of the pre-eternal decree. They fall into two separate categories: he who has a synthetic knowledge and he who has a distinctive knowledge. The second of these two categories is superior to the first. In fact he knows what the Divine Knowledge knows about him—either because God grants him knowledge of what He obtains from his very essence or because He reveals to him both his immutable essence and the sequence of all his future states. This last case is the most elevated of all'.[36]

It would seem that Ibn ʿArabī claimed he belonged to this last category. Does he not say himself that at the moment when he embarked for the first time on a boat to the Maghreb he had a vision of all his future states—and even the states of disciples of his such as Qūnāwī and Qūnāwī's father?[37]

A 'FACE WITHOUT A NAPE'

'When His Essence became cloaked in my khirqa
Both Arabs and non-Arabs hesitated about it.'[38]

IBN ʿARABĪ seems to have been invested with the *khirqa* for the first time in 592/1195, in Seville. It will be remembered that this is an initiatory rite[39] which binds the disciple to his teacher, who by transmitting to him his *baraka* or spiritual influx makes him a new link in the uninterrupted chain (*silsila*) that goes back to the Prophet.[40] However, it is important to understand that the term *khirqa*—frock' or 'cloak'—should not be taken literally. The investiture is not necessarily performed in actual practice by the transmission of a cloak or garment, but can also be accomplished (as was to be the case with Ibn ʿArabī in the East) by using a turban or just a simple piece of material. And it must also be emphasised that the wearing of the *khirqa* (*libs al-khirqa*) was not always understood in the same way in all periods and in all parts of the Muslim world.[41] In Ibn ʿArabī's time investiture with the *khirqa*

36. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, p.60. 37. See above, start of chapter 5.
38. *Dīwān*, p.58.
39. It can also assume other forms, such as *talqīn al-dhikr*, *ʿahd* or *mushābaka*.
40. The a-historical nature of some of these chains is due to the fact that transmission of *baraka* can occur between the *rūḥāniyya*—the 'spiritual presence' of a shaikh who has been dead for tens of years—and a *murīd* or disciple who has never met him physically. In this case the link is of the *uwaysī* type already referred to above in chapter 2.
41. Regarding the concept of *khirqa* cf. *EI*² s.v.; Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-maʿārif*, vol. V of Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, Cairo (no date), pp.79–80. For the different methods of investiture

was a form of initiatory bond frequently used in the East, along with other methods equally well attested in Sufi literature. On the other hand, in the Islamic West the term *khirqa* appears to have tended to be used as a symbolic way of describing *ṣuḥba*—keeping the regular company of a teacher—rather than as referring to an actual form of ritual affiliation. This at any rate was how Ibn ʿArabī interpreted the term—in conformity with the usage of Sufis he had known in the West—before his arrival in the East.

The first master to endow Ibn ʿArabī with the *khirqa* was Taqī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī al-Tawzarī al-Qasṭallānī. This man belonged to a family of southern Tunisian origin which had affiliations with Sufism that were to take a rather strange turn. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, himself a *muḥaddith-sūfī*,[42] had two brothers: Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad and Muḥammad. Muḥammad settled in Marrakech and entered the service of the Almohads as a *ṭālib*.[43] As for Abū l-ʿAbbās (*d.* 636/1238)—whom Ibn ʿArabī was to meet in Egypt and at whose request he wrote the *Kitāb al-khalwa al-muṭlaqa*[44]—he was a disciple of Shaikh Qurashī (*d.* 599/1202) and, in accordance with his teacher's wish, married his widow. From this union the famous Quṭb al-Dīn Qasṭallānī was born: a relentless enemy of Ibn Sabʿīn and of the school of Ibn ʿArabī, denounced quite justifiably by Massignon as a 'witch-hunter'.

Our information about this first of Ibn ʿArabī's investitures derives from two autobiographical sources which disagree with each other about the *silsila*, or chain. In a small unpublished treatise called *Kitāb nasab al-khirqa*, where Ibn ʿArabī enumerates his *silsilas*, he states that in 592/1195 in Seville he received the *khirqa* from Taqī l-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Tawzarī and that in 594/1197 in Fez he received it from Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Tamīmī al-Fāsī; he adds that both these men received it themselves from Abū l-Fatḥ al-

(*khirqa*, *ʿahd*, *talqīn al-dhikr*, etc.) cf. J.S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Oxford 1971, pp.181–3.

42. *Tak.*, ed. Codera, § 1654; *Fut.*, I, p.187; *Kitāb nasab al-khirqa*, MS. Esad Efendi 1507, f° 97; MS. Yahya Efendi 2415, f° 3b.

43. The *ṭullāb* were an official Almohad body. In a sense they were the guardians of tradition: their mission was to study the *sharīʿa* and *tawḥīd* (as formulated by the Mahdī) and teach the rudiments of the faith to people who were ignorant of them. Cf. *Historia politica del imperio almohade*, I, p.213, and *Trente-sept Lettres officielles almohades*, p.133. For the three Qasṭallānī brothers see Denis Gril's biobibliographical sketch in his edition of Ṣafī al-Dīn Ibn Abī Manṣūr's *Risāla*, pp.210–11.

44. *Fut.*, I, pp.391–2; IV, p.474. For Abū l-Abbas Qasṭallānī cf. *Dībāj*, pp.67–8; *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, I, p.190; Ibn Abī l-Manṣūr, *Risāla*, pp.129–30, and the biobibliographical sketch on pp.210–11. For the *Kitāb al-khalwa al-muṭlaqa* (one of Ibn ʿArabī's unpublished works) cf. *Histoire et classification*, R.G. § 255.

Maḥmūdī.[45] However, in the first volume of the *Futūḥāt*[46] he records that the *khirqa khaḍiriyya* was transmitted to him by Taqī al-Dīn Tawzarī, who had received it from Shaikh Ṣadr al-Dīn Ibn Ḥamawayh, who had received it from his grandfather who in turn had obtained it from Khaḍir. The Banū Ḥamawayh were a family of some importance, Iranian in origin, and several of its members held the role (itself more political than spiritual) of *shaykh al-shuyūkh* or shaikh of shaikhs at Damascus.[47] Ṣadr al-Dīn himself assumed this role after his father's death in 577/1181, and retained it until his own death in 616/1219. One point worth noting in passing is that to judge from Ibn ʿArabī's references to Ṣadr al-Dīn, which are few and far between, even though the two shaikhs were both living in the East at the same time they apparently never met.[48]

Apart from these details, Ibn ʿArabī's assertion that Ṣadr al-Dīn received the *khirqa khaḍiriyya* from his grandfather poses something of a problem. If we examine the genealogical tree of the Banū Ḥamawayh[49] we find that Ṣadr al-Dīn's grandfather was in fact Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī, a pupil of Ghazālī who died in 539/1144; and yet Ṣadr al-Dīn himself was only born in 543/1148. Furthermore, Haydar Amolī (*d.* approx. 787/1386) specifies in the prolegomena to his *Naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ*—a vast commentary on Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*—that it was Muḥammad b. Ḥamawayh (*d.* 530/1135), Ṣadr al-Dīn's great-grandfather and a pupil of the Imām al-Ḥaramayn, who had been Khaḍir's disciple.[50] And finally, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa (*d.* 668/1270), author of a famous biographical compilation about doctors, reproduces in the second volume of his *Ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'* the chain of Ṣadr al-Dīn in the form in which it had been transmitted to his uncle Rashīd al-Dīn Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa by Ṣadr al-

45. The specifications of date and place do not occur in the two manuscripts listed above, but they are to be found in another manuscript kindly communicated to me by O. Yahia. In *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.39 n.1, R.W.J. Austin states that Ibn ʿArabī had already received the *khirqa* from Khaḍir in 580/1184 at Seville. He bases this conclusion on a passage in the *Kitāb nasab al-khirqa*, ms. Esad Efendi 1507, f° 98; however, in the passage in question Ibn ʿArabī simply says that he had been Khaḍir's companion (*ṣaḥibtu*) and had received from him the rules of propriety and submission to masters (*ta'addabtu bihi wa akhadhtu ʿanhu al-taslīm li maqulāt al-shuyūkh*). In other words he is simply referring here to his first encounter with Khaḍir at Seville. He also alludes to his investitures at Seville, Fez and Mecca elsewhere, in a short poem in the *Dīwān*, p.58.

46. *Fut.*, I, p.187.

47. For the Banū Ḥamawayh cf. L.Pouzet, *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, I, pp.253, 285; C. Cahen, *Les Peuples musulmans dans l'histoire médiévale*, Damascus 1977, pp.457–82.

48. Apart from the passage in *Futūḥāt*, I, p.187 I have only been able to find one other reference to Ṣadr al-Dīn b. Ḥamawayh, in the *Sharḥ kitāb khal' al-naʿlayn*, f° 173.

49. Cf. e.g. L. Pouzet, *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, I, p.285; *EI*² s.v. Awlād al-Shaykh.

50. Ḥaydar Āmolī, *al-Muqaddima min kitāb naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ*, ed. H. Corbin and O. Yahia, Bibliothèque iranienne, vol. XXII, Tehran-Paris, 1352/1974, p.221.

Dīn himself.[51] Now according to this document, Ṣadr al-Dīn received the *khirqa* not from his grandfather but from his father, ʿUmar (*d.* 577/1181), who in turn had received it from his own father, Muḥammad b. Ḥamawayh, who had obtained it from Khaḍir who himself had obtained it from the Prophet. Here again we come up against a contradiction, because Muḥammad b. Ḥamawayh was not the father but the grandfather of ʿUmar b. Ḥamawayh. There is a link missing—namely Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī (*d.* 539/1144), the father of ʿUmar and the grandfather of Ṣadr al-Dīn, unless, that is, ʿUmar b. Ḥamawayh did not in fact receive the *khirqa* directly from his grandfather Muḥammad b. Ḥamawayh. But whatever the truth of the matter is, from these various texts it emerges that in receiving the *khirqa* from Taqī al-Dīn Tawzarī Ibn ʿArabī actually received a double affiliation with the Prophet—one of them passing via Khaḍir, whom, it will be remembered, he had already met on three occasions.

On his arrival in the East Ibn ʿArabī was again invested with the *khirqa*: firstly at Mecca in 599, at the hands of Yūnus b. Yaḥyā al-Hāshimī[52] who himself had received it from ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (*d.* 561/1165), and again two years later in Mosul, from a disciple of the famous Qaḍīb al-Bān.[53] This second investiture made the Shaikh al-Akbar revise his opinion about the profundity of significance of the *libs al-khirqa*. Although in its most general sense this investiture is simply a symbol of initiatory companionship, according to Ibn ʿArabī it is also—in a more specific and technical sense—the means by which a master produces an immediate transformation in his disciple. In his own words: 'One of my teachers, ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Jāmiʿ, who was a companion of ʿAlī al-Mutawakkil and Qaḍīb al-Bān, had met Khaḍir; he used to live in his garden outside Mosul. Khaḍir had invested him with the *khirqa* in the presence of Qaḍīb al-Bān. He in turn transmitted it to me, on the very same spot in his garden where he had received it from Khaḍir and in the same way that it had been performed in his case[54] . . .. From this time onwards I maintained [the validity and effectiveness of] investiture with the *khirqa* and I invested people with it because I understood that Khaḍir ascribed importance to it. Up until then I was no supporter of investiture with the *khirqa* when understood in this sense: as far as I was concerned it was

51. Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyun al-anbā' fi ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*, ed. A. Müller, Königsberg Selbstverlag, 1884, II, p.250. This *silsila* is reproduced by J.S.Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, p.262.

52. *Kitāb nasab al-khirqa*, ms. Esad Efendi 1507, f° 96; ms. Yahya Efendi 2415, f° 3.

53. Idem, Esad Ef., f° 98; Yahya Ef., f° 3; *Fut.*, I, p.187; *Durra*, § 69, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.157.

54. Ibn ʿArabī also describes the incident in the *Durra*, where he specifies that in this particular instance the *khirqa* was a small cotton cap. Cf. *Durra* § 69, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.157.

simply an expression of companionship . . .. So it is that when the masters of spiritual states perceive some imperfection in one of their companions and wish to perfect that person's state, they resort to the custom of meeting with the person alone. The master then takes the piece of clothing he is wearing in the spiritual state he is in at that particular moment, removes it and puts it on the man whom he wishes to guide to perfection. He then holds the man closely to him—and the master's state spreads to his disciple, who thereby attains to the desired perfection. This is the "clothing" as I understand it and as it has been transmitted by our masters'.[55]

Apart from the certificate of investiture made out to the addressee of the *Kitāb nasab al-khirqa*,[56] elsewhere Ibn ᶜArabī supplies the names of fifteen people to whom he had transmitted the *khirqa*. The source of this information is a series of short poems placed at the beginning of the *Dīwān*.[57] Interestingly, fourteen out of these fifteen people are *murīdāt*, women;[58] the only male disciple mentioned is Badr al-Ḥabashī[59]—although of course this is not to deny that Ibn ᶜArabī transmitted the *khirqa* to numerous other *murīd*s or male disciples. And one other detail is even more interesting. In the majority of cases it was during his sleep that Ibn ᶜArabī saw himself investing these women with the *khirqa*: so, for example, in the case of the daughter of the great Shāfiᶜite *qāḍī* Ibn Zakī (*d.* 617/1220), a woman whom certain sources referred to earlier state that he married.[60]

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Ibn ᶜArabī was a little over thirty years old when, at Seville in 592H, he received this investiture with the *khirqa*. He was already—and probably had been for several years[61]—an accomplished spiritual teacher in his own right. To judge from the following anecdote which he recorded in the *Futūḥāt*, by

55. *Fut.*, I, p.187. Ibn ᶜArabī alludes again to this 'technical' significance of the *khirqa* in the *Kitāb nasab*, ms. Esad Ef., ff^{os} 90/90b.

56. The name of the person varies from manuscript to manuscript. In MS. Esad Ef., f° 96, his name is given as Sayyid Kamāl al-Dīn b. Aḥmad . . . b. ᶜAlī b. Abī Tālīb, but in ms. Yahya Ef., f° 3, he is called Aḥmad b. ᶜAlī al-Ishbīlī.

57. *Dīwān*, pp.53–60.

58. When referring to two of them Ibn ᶜArabī uses the expression 'my daughter'. Are we to understand this figuratively or literally? One of them is called Dunyā (p.54), the other Safrā (p.57).

59. *Dīwān*, p.54.

60. *Dīwān*, p.56. Before giving the poems that come next, Ibn ᶜArabī states: 'Here ends what happened in the world of the senses; what I will now describe took place during sleep'. This statement is followed by a series of short poems which mention eight women who received the *khirqa* from him.

61. We do not know the exact date when Ibn ᶜArabī had his first disciples, but 586/1190 would be a reasonable guess.

this time and in spite of his youth he had a very imposing bearing and appearance: a presence that inspired fear and respect in his disciples. 'I once spent the night at the home of Abū l-Ḥusayn b. Abī ᶜAmr Ibn Ṭufayl in Seville, in 592. He had enormous respect for me and always observed the rules of propriety (*adab*) in my presence. That night we were joined by Abū l-Qāsim al-Khaṭīb, Abū Bakr Ibn Sām, and Abū l-Ḥakīm Ibn al-Sarrāj.[62] The respect everyone had for me prevented them from relaxing; they remained polite and silent. I decided to resort to a ruse to help them unwind. Our host asked me to treat them to a little of my teaching, and I saw that this was the opportunity to put my plan into action. I replied to him: "I must tell you about one of my works entitled 'The Guide regarding transgression of the rules of propriety' (*al-irshād fī kharq al-adab al-muᶜtād*); if you wish, I will explain one of its chapters to you". "I would be delighted", he replied. I then proceeded to place my leg on his chest, and I said: "Give me a little massage!" He and the others grasped what I was driving at, and they began to loosen up. Their torpor and tenseness vanished, and we passed the very best of nights together.'[63]

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Without any doubt the year 592 marked the apogee of the Almohad Empire. Not content with his victory at Alarcos, Manṣūr went ahead with the invasion of Castile; he marched as far as Toledo, and Alfonso the Eighth called for a truce—in vain. On his return from the expedition, which was more spectacular than military, the Almohad sultan carried out a meticulous inspection of his administration at Seville. He uncovered and punished various crimes of embezzlement, dismissed some officials and appointed others. With order and justice apparently re-established Manṣūr embarked on a fresh demonstration of force which took him to the gates of Madrid, where he signed the ten-year treaty proposed to him by Alphonso the Eighth. Andalusians no longer had anything to fear.[64] And yet Ibn ᶜArabī left Andalusia once again for the Maghreb. Why this fresh departure? Certainly there can be no question this time of 'flight' from the enemy. The answer to the question is given by Ibn ᶜArabī himself later on in the same sketch from the *Durra* (the one devoted to Ṣāliḥ al-Barbarī) in which he touches on the domestic problems mentioned earlier.[65] 'It used to be the case that the Emir of believers wanted me to enter his service. To this end he sent me the former

62. This disciple is also mentioned in *Fut.*, I, p.154, in connection with Averroes' funeral.

63. *Fut.*, IV, p.539.

64. For the chronicling of the year 592 cf. Marrākushī, *Muᶜjib*, p.206; Ibn ᶜIdhārī, *Bayān*, III, pp.198–202; J. Bosch Vila, *Sevilla islámica*, p.168.

65. *Durra*, § 3, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.75–6.

Chief of Justice Yaʿqūb Abū l-Qāsim b. Taqī.[66] He had instructed the judge to meet me alone and not try to force my hand if I refused to accept the proposal. When he came to make me the offer, I refused; the words of the shaikh [Barbarī] were still ringing in my ears. Subsequently I met the Prince, and he asked me about the two sisters of mine who were in need of protection. When I had explained their situation to him he proposed to me to find suitable husbands for them; my reply was that I would attend to the matter myself. He said to me: "Don't be so hasty; I have a duty towards them."[67] . . . Shortly after I had left the Prince, he sent me a messenger to renew his offer regarding my two sisters. I thanked the messenger and departed almost immediately for Fez together with my family and a paternal cousin . . .. As soon as I had settled in Fez I married off my two sisters and so was freed of responsibility for them.'

Ibn ʿArabī made three journeys to Fez: first of all in 591, then in 593 (remaining this time at least until 594), and finally in 597. After this last visit he went on to Tunis, and from there he left the Islamic West for good. As for his meeting with the Almohad sultan in Andalusia—an encounter which immediately preceded and even motivated one of his journeys to Fez—it cannot have occurred in 591 because, according to Ibn ʿArabī's explicit statement,[68] when Manṣūr arrived at Seville in Jumādā II 591/1195 he himself was already in Fez. Neither can it have occurred in 597: that year falls within the reign of Manṣūr's son, Nāṣir, who appears not to have come to Andalusia until 606/1209.[69] Consequently it is very probable that this interview with the sultan, which precipitated Ibn ʿArabī's departure from Seville for Fez, occurred late in 592 or early in 593. During this period Manṣūr was living in Seville, and more specifically at the castle of Aznalfarache which he had moved into on the day after the battle of Alarcos; he was only to leave Andalusia, for Marrakech, in Jumādā I 594/1197.[70]

66. Doubtless b. Baqī should be read instead of b. Taqī. Abū l-Qāsim b. Baqī was indeed for a long while *qāḍī* under Yaʿqūb, as well as holding the post for some time under the rule of his son. He appears to have been highly esteemed by Yaʿqūb al-Manṣūr, who made a point of insisting in his will that he should be confirmed in his position of office. According to Huici Miranda this favouritism on Yaʿqūb's part was due to the fact that Ibn Baqī had abandoned the Mālikite *madhhab* in preference for Ibn Ḥazm's. Cf. *Historia política del Imperio almohade*, I, p.384; *Muʿjib*, pp.191, 207.

67. It will be remembered that Ibn ʿArabī's father, who had spent part of his life in the service of the Almohads, was dead.

68. See above, chapter 6 *ad init.*

69. *Muʿjib*, pp.234–35; *Sevilla islámica*, p.170. There was no need for Nāṣir to concern himself with Andalusia, which was out of danger thanks to the ten-year treaty signed in 593/1196. On the other hand, he was obliged to take action to quell the revolt of the Banū Ghāniyya in Ifrīqiya.

70. *Muʿjib*, p.206; *Sevilla islámica*, p.169.

The major experiences that Ibn ʿArabī went through in Fez, in both 593 and 594, meant that the town came to occupy a privileged place in his travels almost comparable to the position later occupied by Mecca. It should also be noted that, contrary to his previous visit which appears to have been fairly brief, this time Ibn ʿArabī stayed in Fez for a considerable period. He was there in 593, in 594, and possibly even in 595—at any rate we only see him back in Andalusia in that year.

If Ibn ʿArabī had been asked to choose a symbolic name for the town of Fez, he would no doubt have called it *Nūr*, Light: it was here that he attained once again to the Abode already referred to—the Abode in which he 'became light'. But on this second occasion the interior metamorphosis brought about by this beatific vision was accompanied by a very tangible charism: just like the Prophet, who used to say he could see behind his back, Ibn ʿArabī became a 'face without a nape' (*wajh bi lā qafā*), one total eye capable of seeing in every single direction. He describes this phenomenon twice in the *Futūḥāt*, and in considerable detail. In the lengthy chapter 69[71] he writes as follows: 'Know that the Prophet is all face and no nape or neck. That is why he declared, "I see you behind my back".[72] . . . When I inherited this station from him and it became mine, I happened to be directing the prayer at the al-Azhar Mosque in Fez. At the *miḥrāb* my entire essence became one single eye; I could see from every side of myself in just the same way that I could see my *qibla*. Nobody escaped my view: neither the person who was entering nor the person who was leaving, and not even those who were performing the prayer behind me . . ..' The second account occurs in chapter 206, and contains some additional points of detail. 'I obtained this station [of Light] in 593 at Fez, during the *ʿaṣr* prayer while I myself was directing the prayers at the al-Azhar Mosque, which is in [the district of] ʿAyn al-khayl. It appeared to me in the form of a light that was if anything more visible than what was in front of me. Also, when I saw this light the status of the direction "behind" (*ḥukm al-khalf*) ceased for me. I no longer had a back or the nape of a neck, and while the vision lasted I could no longer distinguish between different sides of myself. I was like a sphere; I was no longer aware of myself as having any "side" except as the result of a mental process—not an experienced reality . . ..'[73]

Two particular points emerge from these accounts. Firstly, the illumination was not simply an internal one because it was accompanied by a

71. *Fut.*, I, p.491.

72. Bukhārī, *īmān*, 3.

73. *Fut.*, II, p.486. For the symbolism of the nape of the neck cf. *ʿUqlat al-mustawfiz*, ed. Nyberg, pp.98–9, where Ibn ʿArabī states that the believer is a 'face without a nape', the non-believer (*kāfir*) 'a nape without a face' and the hypocrite (*munāfiq*) 'a face plus a nape'.

physical phenomenon during the course of which the spatial conditions of the body were transcended ('I was like a sphere').[74] It must also be emphasised here that according to Ibn ᶜArabī one of the characteristics of the Pole—although not necessarily a characteristic unique to him—is precisely the quality of being a 'face without a nape'.[75] Secondly, according to Ibn ᶜArabī the station in question is one that forms part of the Muḥammadan heritage. Elsewhere he explains in connection with this issue that only he who has attained to this station in which he is able to perceive the *qibla* in *all* directions has the right (as did the Prophet) to perform prayers on horseback. Finally, it is interesting to note that this incident occurred in the al-Azhar Mosque: the imām there was normally Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Tamīmī, who in the very same place and during the same year transmitted to Ibn ᶜArabī his hagiographical work on the saints of Fez,[76] and in the year 594/1197 invested him with the *khirqa*.

The year 593 was for Ibn ᶜArabī also the year of his encounter—again at Fez—with the Pole of his time: Ashall al-Qabā'ilī. In fact it would be more correct to speak of him identifying the Pole rather than encountering him, because he had already been frequenting his company for some time; as he states in the *Durra*, this man never spoke to him of anything apart from the Qur'ān. However, he was unaware of the fact that the man held the function of *quṭbiyya* until the day when God revealed it to him during the course of a vision. 'I met the Pole of the time in 593, at Fez. God had shown him to me during a vision and had revealed to me who he was. Subsequently [on the next day][77] several of us gathered together in Ibn Ḥayyūn's garden at Fez; he himself was there, but nobody paid him any attention. He was a foreigner, originally from Bougie, and he had a withered hand. With me at this gathering were several masters from among the men of God, all of them highly regarded in the Path, such as Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-Ḥaṣṣār[78] and others like

74. It will be noted in this connection that according to Ibn ᶜArabī primordial Man was spherical. Cf. *Tadbīrāt ilāhiyya*, p.225.

75. *Kitāb manzil al-quṭb*, in *Rasā'il*, Hyderabad 1948, p.6.

76. *Fut.*, IV, p.503. Cf. also A. Bel, *Sidi Bou Medyan et son maître Ed-Daqqâq à Fès*, I, p.56. Alfred Bel appears not to have known that Tamīmī died in 603/1206 because he refers to him as if he was writing later.

77. Ibn ᶜArabī also describes the encounter in the *Durra*, and it is there that he gives the information that the name of the Pole was Ashall al-Qabā'ilī. He adds that one night he was informed in a dream about the nature of this man's role, and that on the very next day he encountered him in Ibn Ḥayyūn's garden. Cf. *Durra*, § 62, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.152–53.

78. To date I have unfortunately not been able to find any biographical account of al-Ḥaṣṣār. Tādilī simply states that he was a disciple of Shaikh Abū l-Rabīᶜ Sulaymān Tilimsānī (*d.* 579/1187) at Fez: cf. *Tashawwuf*, p.280. But Ibn ᶜArabī refers to him twice in the *Futūḥāt*: in *Fut.*, III, p.34 he says that Ḥaṣṣār was one of the *malāmiyya* and in *Fut.*, I, p.233 he tells a story about a

him. All these men showed great respect towards me. *The meeting was only for my sake, and nobody else apart from me spoke about the knowledge of the Way*; if they happened to speak about it among themselves *they subsequently submitted the results of their discussion to me*. It so happened that the Pole came to be mentioned—while he himself was present. I said to them: "My brothers, I am going to tell you some amazing things about the Pole of your time". In saying this I turned towards the man who during my sleep had been shown to me by God to be the Pole, and who also often kept my company and loved me greatly. He said to me: "Say what God has revealed to you, but do not reveal his identity!" . . . After everyone had left, this Pole came up to me and said: "May God reward you. You did well in not referring to him by name. May the salvation and mercy of God be upon you!" This was in fact a farewell greeting, although I did not know it; never did I see him again.'[79]

There is one major inference to be drawn from this account: even though Ibn ᶜArabī was still only a young man of thirty-three, he was already recognised at this time by Sufis in the Islamic West as being the Master *par excellence*.

The renown Ibn ᶜArabī enjoyed at this period among Sufis—and perhaps among non-Sufis as well?—is confirmed by his narrative of the circumstances surrounding his meeting with another 'Pillar' (*watad*), Ibn Jaᶜdūn al-Ḥinawī. 'I had arrived in Fez, where people had heard me spoken of [without recognising me] and hoped to be able to meet me. To avoid them I escaped from the house I was in and went to the Great Mosque. Unable to find me in the house, they looked for me in the mosque. I saw them coming towards me, and when they asked me where I was I replied: "Continue looking for him until you find him". While I was sitting there, very smartly dressed, the shaikh [Ibn Jaᶜdūn] came and sat down in front of me. I had never met him before. Through divine inspiration I was made aware of his states, of his station, of the fact that he was one of the four Pillars (*awtād*) and of the fact that his son would inherit his station. I told him I knew who he was. He shut his book and got up, saying, "Don't unmask me, don't unmask me!" '[80]

So both Ibn Jaᶜdūn and Ashall Qabā'ilī were Pillars and, *a fortiori*, *malāmiyya* as well. They also shared one other feature in common: just as nobody paid any attention to Qabā'ilī, so (as Ibn ᶜArabī notes) 'when Ibn Jaᶜdūn was absent nobody noticed, and when he was present nobody asked

disciple of Ḥaṣṣār who suffered from having 'fallen' from his station (*maqām*), and whom Ibn ᶜArabī managed to cure through the exercise of gentleness and patience.

79. *Fut.*, IV, p.76.

80. *Rūḥ*, § 17, pp.109–10; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.115–16.

his opinion. When he arrived somewhere nobody welcomed him, and during the course of conversation nobody spoke to him. Everyone ignored him'.[81] Both men alike were anonymous individuals, unobtrusive, almost invisible. It will be remembered that this unobtrusiveness is the characteristic of the *malāmiyya*: 'They are the Hidden, the Pure, . . . concealed among men . . .'.[82] But not all of them enjoy this privilege. Some of them are—in spite of themselves—invested with an external governing function (*tadbīr*): so for example the first four caliphs, who combined a spiritual function with a temporal one. Others again were endowed with an apostolic mission which obliged them to emerge from anonymity and make themselves known: to reveal themselves in order to reveal God. This was doubtless the case with Ibn ᶜArabī, who states time and time again in his writings that he had received an order from God commanding him to guide men and counsel them: 'I have been commanded to teach created beings and counsel them; I have been forced and constrained to do so against my will (*qasran wa ḥatman wājiban*)'.[83] And as he says in the very first lines of the *Rūḥ*: 'This mission has been entrusted to me and to me in particular, more than to any other man'.[84]

People of this kind make the supreme sacrifice: they agree to conceal their *ᶜubūdiyya*, or servanthood, for the sake of manifesting the divine *rubūbiyya* or lordship. This sacrifice often exposes them to calumny and hatred, and sometimes it becomes intolerable. That is why several times during his life Ibn ᶜArabī was tempted to evade his responsibility so that he could consecrate himself entirely to *ᶜibāda* or worship, hidden from other people's sight.[85]

'Lord, I have asked You to grant Your servant permission
To remain hidden until the end of time
Like Ibn Jaᶜdūn, a teacher and a guide
Who was always veiled by God.
Lord, I have asked You for the protection of occultation . . .'.[86]

Ibn ᶜArabī's request was not to be granted; God had another destiny reserved for him. He was already aware of the fact, and was to receive confirmation of it in the same place: Fez.

81. Ibid. It is also worth noting that both men suffered from a physical handicap: the Pole had a 'withered hand' and Ibn Jaᶜdūn 'suffered from a speech defect and could only speak with considerable difficulty' (cf. *Rūḥ*, § 17; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.115).
82. *Fut.*, I, p.181.
83. *Rūḥ*, p.31.
84. Ibid., p.19.
85. Cf. e.g. *Rūḥ*, p.31; *Kitāb al-mubashshirāt*, ms. Fatih 5322, f° 91.
86. *Dīwān*, p.333.

ASCENSION

DURING the course of his lifetime Ibn ᶜArabī journeyed thousands of miles and passed through dozens of countries: from Tunis to Mecca, Jerusalem to Baghdad, Konya to Damascus. But it was in Fez, once again, in the year 594/1198, that he made the longest and most extraordinary journey of all. This was no longer a horizontal journey but a vertical one, not a terrestrial but a celestial one: a spiritual, not physical, journey which carries the pilgrim beyond every geographical frontier into the Divine Presence, 'two bows'-length away or nearer' (Qur'ān 53:9). For the saints, *awliyā'*, imitation of the Prophet culminates in this 'Journey by Night' in which each of them actualises spiritually what for Muḥammad was the supreme experience of the Ascension (*miᶜrāj*) in the body through the heavens to the Throne of God.[87] But just as no two saints will ever experience the identical illumination (*fatḥ*), similarly one's *miᶜrāj* or ascension will always be different from another's. That is why even though every saint or *walī* follows the path opened up by the Messenger, each individual discovers a different landscape because this perilous quest is basically neither more nor less than the total and perfect realisation of the prophetic statement 'He who knows himself knows his Lord'. Man is a microcosm (*ᶜālam ṣaghīr*) containing in himself at least potentially all the possibilities displayed in the universe; as a true copy (*nuskha*) of the macrocosm, everything that exists in it has its counterpart in man. One consequence of this is that everything contemplated by the saint during his Noctural Voyage—the blaze of theophanies, the angelic splendours, the temptations and trials, and the prophetic figures he meets—all takes place inside himself. As Ibn ᶜArabī was to say of his own 'ascension': 'My voyage took place nowhere else except inside myself'.[88] In this sense the Ascension is nothing but the exploration of one's own being. Only at the end of this internal adventure, in which the saint is simultaneously the theatre and the actor, is he close to attaining the goal of his quest. But the *miᶜrāj* in the strict sense of 'Ascension' is only a part of the journey. Unless the pilgrim happens to be one of the *wāqifūn*—those who come to their eternal stopping-place in the contemplation of the One—he must now make the symmetrically opposite journey and descend again to created beings. In his *Risālat al-anwār* Ibn ᶜArabī explains that the *rājiᶜūn*, 'those who return', are of two kinds: 'On the one hand there is the person who is sent back for himself . . .. Him we call the gnostic (*al-ᶜārif*): he returns so as to perfect himself by following a different route from the one he had taken. On the other hand there is the

87. For the Prophet's *miᶜrāj* cf. *EI*² s.v.; Qushayrī, *Kitāb al-miᶜrāj*, Cairo 1954.
88. *Fut.*, III, p.350.

person who is sent back to created beings for the sake of directing and guiding them by his word. He is the knowing-heir (*al-ᶜālim al-wārith*)'.[89] As we will see, Ibn ᶜArabī plainly belonged to this second category; and in spite of his wish he was not to remain in the shade, like Ibn Jaᶜdūn.

Two texts by Ibn ᶜArabī describe—in very different ways from each other—his own experience of the *miᶜrāj*. On the one hand there is the *Kitāb al-isrā'*,[90] the 'Book of the Journey by Night', which was written in Fez in the month of Jumādā 594, probably on his 'return' from his celestial pilgrimage; in it he retraces his itinerary in symbolic mode, using a style that alternates between rhymed prose and poetry. And on the other hand there is chapter 327 of the *Futūḥāt*,[91] where the Shaikh al-Akbar describes the same experience but much more explicitly. Chapter 167 of the *Futūḥāt*[92] and the *Risālat al-anwār* also deal with the same subject, but impersonally. As these four sources have already been studied in detail elsewhere[93] there is no need here to do more than summarise the chief stages in Ibn ᶜArabī's initiatory journey as they are outlined in chapter 367 of the *Futūḥāt*.[94]

After being stripped of his corporeal nature—for whereas the Prophet's Ascension was made *bi jismihi*, in his body, saints (*awliyā'*) only accomplish it in spirit[95]—the shaikh arrived at the first heaven, where he was greeted by the Father of Humanity. Adam revealed to him that all men are on the Right of God and this means that everyone without exception is destined for bliss. As Ibn ᶜArabī explains: 'If the divine wrath was eternal, the same would apply to the punishment . . .; but the divine wrath will cease at the Great Judgement'. In fact, he continues, the Resurrection will last only for a limited period of time—the fifty thousand years corresponding to the fifty halts of a thousand years each that were mentioned earlier. This is the period of the imposing of penalties (*iqāmat al-ḥudūd*). Beyond that period the authority, *al-ḥukm*, will belong to the Names 'the All-Merciful' and 'the most Merciful' (*al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*). Ibn ᶜArabī's notion of punishment is one of the aspects of his teaching which was the greatest cause of scandal for the doctors of the Law: interpreting in a strictly literal manner the verses of the Qur'ān[96] which declare the eternity of the stay in hell but not the eternity of the punishment,

89. *Risālat al-anwār*, p.14, in *Rasā'il*, Hyderabad 1948; *Seal of the Saints*, pp.170–71.
90. *Kitāb al-isrā'*, in *Rasā'il*, Hyderabad 1948.
91. *Fut.*, III, p.345–50.
92. *Fut.*, II, pp.270–83.
93. M. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, pp.147–82.
94. Ibn ᶜArabī also refers to his 'night journey' (*isrā'*) in *Futūḥāt*, II, p.620, and adds that he was accompanied by an angel who called him Muḥammad b. Nūr ('Muḥammad son of light').
95. *Fut.*, III, pp.342–3.
96. Cf. e.g. Qur'ān 6:128, 9:68, 16:29.

he considered that the immensity of the Divine Mercy—which according to a Qur'ānic verse 'embraces all things' (7:156)—precludes the perpetuity of infernal suffering. Those beings who are destined to remain eternally in hell will indeed stay there; but for them the fire will become bliss. 'As for the people of hell, they [too] will return to the state of bliss—while still remaining in the fire. Once the period of their punishment is over the fire will of necessity become "freshness and peace" (*bardan wa salāman*) for those who dwell there, and that will be their bliss.'[97] It should be added that for Ibn ᶜArabī felicity or bliss (*naᶜīm*) is simply what accords with (*mulā'im*) the need of each individual's nature. Because the damned by their constitution crave for fire they will only be happy in the fire—and this 'to such a degree', he adds, 'that if they were to gain entrance to Paradise they would suffer'.[98] Elsewhere he states that 'even if the person who has committed the most grievous of sins never departs from the fire—because it is his own fitting abode and from fire he was created, so much so that if he was to leave it he would suffer—he will there experience bliss'.[99]

On his arrival in the second heaven Ibn ᶜArabī had a discussion with Jesus (ᶜĪsā) and John (Yaḥyā). Jesus explained that his ability to bring the dead back to life derived from his spiritual nature which he had received from Gabriel.[100] As for John, he confirmed that the privilege of making 'death die' on the Day of Resurrection would be his, because of his name 'Yaḥyā' ('he lives') which had been given to him by God. 'But'—retorted Ibn ᶜArabī—'there are many men in the world called Yaḥyā!' 'Yes,' John replied, 'but it is I who possess pre-eminence in this name (*lī martabat al-awwaliyya*), and it is therefore through me [i.e. inasmuch as I am the manifestation of the Name *al-Muḥyī*] that all men live who have lived and do live'.

Continuing on his journey Ibn ᶜArabī came to the third heaven, the heaven of Joseph. Here Joseph explained to him the meaning of the Prophet's statement, 'If I had gone through the same ordeal as Joseph and I had been called, I would have responded to the call [immediately]'.[101] The allusion here is to the incident mentioned in the Qur'ān (12:50) when Joseph, a prisoner, replied to the Pharaoh's messenger that he would only accept his freedom when the women had acknowledged their wrong-doing.

97. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, p.169. Ibn ᶜArabī is here comparing—and this again caused a scandal—the nature of this fire of Gehenna with the fire into which Abraham was thrown (Qur'ān 21:69).
98. *Fut.*, IV, p.120.
99. *Fut.*, IV, p.137. On Ibn ᶜArabī's concept of punishment cf. Suᶜād al-Ḥakīm, *Muᶜjam*, §§ 442, 612, 644.
100. It will be remembered that according to Islamic tradition the angel Gabriel appeared before Mary (Qur'ān 19:17), endowed with a human form (*tamaththala*), to breathe the spirit of Jesus into her.
101. Cf. Bukhārī, *taᶜbīr*, 9; *anbiyā'*, 11, 19.

At the fourth heaven Ibn ᶜArabī was welcomed by Idrīs, the Solar Pole, who saluted him as the 'Muḥammadan heir' and—in reply to a question from Ibn ᶜArabī about the plurality of worlds—discussed with him the *tajdīd al-khalq*, the renewal of creation at every instant.[102] At the fifth heaven he met Aaron (Hārūn), who described him as the 'perfect heir' and told him that the denial of the reality of the world by certain gnostics was due to an imperfect knowledge of theophanies.[103] In the sixth heaven Moses described and explained to him his experience of his vision of God, and in so doing resolved the ambiguity in the Qur'ānic verse (7:143) which is appealed to by those who deny the possibility of such a vision.

Finally the shaikh arrived at the seventh heaven, where he saw Abraham leaning against the *bayt al-maᶜmūr*, the Celestial Kaᶜba. From there he continued on his journey until he reached the Lote-Tree of the Limit (*sidrat al-muntahā*); this marks the final stage of the Ascension proper, but not of the Night Journey as a whole. 'I became nothing but light . . .. Then God made His word descend upon me: "Say: we believe in God, and in what has been revealed to us and in what has been revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes [of Israel] and in what has been given to Moses and to Jesus . . ." [Qur'ān 3:84]. Through this one verse He gave me all the verses . . .. In this way *I came to know that I was the totalisation of those whose names had been mentioned to me* (*majmūᶜ man dhukira lī*); this was for me the announcement that I had attained to the station of Muḥammad . . .. During the course of this Nocturnal Journey I obtained the meaning of all the Divine Names and I saw that they all referred to one and the same Object Named and to a single Essence; this Named was the object of my contemplation, and this Essence was my very own being. The journey I had made was only inside myself, and it was towards myself that I had been guided; from this I knew that I was a servant in a state of purity, without the slightest trace of sovereignty.'

Here the autobiographical account in the *Futūḥāt* comes to an end. After exploring his inner planets and speaking with his prophets, the pilgrim discovered his complete servitude and the absolute sovereignty of God. But his journey did not stop there. He was one of the *rājiᶜūn*—those who descend again to created beings. More specifically, he belonged to the second category of *rājiᶜūn*—the category of beings whom he himself refers to as 'knowing-heirs' (*ᶜālim-wārith*)[104] and whom God sends back with the mission of guiding men. Moses had warned Ibn ᶜArabī of this in the sixth heaven when he

102. Ibn ᶜArabī told Idrīs of his encounter in front of the Kaᶜba with a man who belonged to a humanity prior to our own, and who revealed to him that there were several Adams.

103. Cf. Balyānī, *Épître*, p.33.

104. *Risāla fī l-walāya*, p.25; *Risālat al-anwār*, p.14.

announced to him:[105] 'Know that you will present yourself in front of your Lord, and He will reveal to you the secret of your heart and the mysteries of His Book. He will give you the key to the lock on His door, and in so doing He will bring your inheritance to completion and validate your mission (*liyuṣiḥḥa inbiᶜāthaka*) which is your share [in the verse]: "And He has revealed to His servant" (Qur'ān 53:10). Don't let this privilege encourage you to want to receive either a Law from Him which would abrogate the preceding one, or a revealed Book: that door is closed . . .. After you have reached this station you will return, sent back (*tarjiᶜu mabᶜūthan*); and just as you are an heir, it is necessary that others in turn inherit from you. So be lenient in your command over created beings'. This advice from Moses is in some respects reminiscent of his intervention in the Prophet's Nocturnal Journey for the sake of reducing the number of obligatory prayers. The details of his advice—specifying that Ibn ᶜArabī will be sent back in order to transmit his heritage—plus the title of Muḥammadan Heir and Perfect Heir bestowed on him by Aaron and Idrīs, and also Ibn ᶜArabī's reference to himself as the 'totalisation of all the prophets', are all allusions to his role as Seal of Muḥammadan Sainthood. In fact, the *miᶜrāj* of 594 represents the second act in the divine comedy of which the first scene had already been acted out in 586, back in Andalusia.

'As for the Seal of Muḥammadan Sainthood, which is the specific Seal of the sainthood reserved for Muḥammad's apparent community[106] . . . I came to know the details about it in Fez, in Morocco, in 594. God familiarised me with it and showed me the sign of its function—which I will not name.'[107] In another passage in the *Futūḥāt* Ibn ᶜArabī declares that he came to know the identity of the Muḥammadan Seal in 595; but, as we will see, this was a slip of the pen. 'He is living in our age. I came to know as much in 595. I saw the sign of his function, a sign which God has hidden from His servants but which He revealed to me at Fez in such a way that I knew he was the Seal of Sainthood.'[108] But although in these passages Ibn ᶜArabī obstinately refuses to name the person in question, he did in fact disclose the person's name in several poems (one of them included in the *Futūḥāt*)[109] and especially in a very long *qaṣīda* in the *Dīwān*[110] in which he outlines the various phases of his investiture with the supreme function of sainthood. Here is an extract:

'Among the servants of God I am a hallowed spirit
In just the same way that the Night of Destiny is the spirit of nights.
I have purified myself of imparity through parity

105. *Kitāb al-isrā'*, p.26. 106. In other words the 'historical' Islamic community.
107. *Fut.*, III, p.514. 108. *Fut.*, II, p.49.
109. *Fut.*, I, p.244; see above, chapter 3. 110. *Dīwān*, pp.332–37.

Because by virtue of what is in me I am a stranger to parity and imparity alike.[111]
And when one night God came and announced to me
That I was the Seal, at the beginning of the month,[112]
He said to those who happened at the time to be
In the Supreme Pleroma and the world of the Commandment:[113]
"Look upon him, because My sign of his function of Seal is to be found on his back.[114]
I have hidden it from the eyes of created beings out of mercy towards them . . ..
I offered him the kingdom in fact and truth, but his reply to Me was:
'What is sublime must remain veiled, for You are hidden,
And blessed is the man who imitates his master in both ease and difficulty' " . . .
I am without a doubt the Inheritor of the knowledge of Muḥammad
As well as of his state, both secretly and manifestly . . ..
I am that in the city of Tunis
As the result of a divine command which intervened during the *dhikr.*
This happened to me in 590 . . .
In an abode pure of all illusion and reflection.
But I only knew I was the Seal and assistant
Four years later at Fez at the time of the full moon.[115] . . .
If I am neither Moses nor Jesus nor their equals
That means nothing to me because I am the totaliser of all that,[116]

111. For the same idea see *Kitāb al-isrā'*, pp.11 and 44.

112. It will be noted that here Ibn ᶜArabī uses the expression *ghurrat al-shahr*, literally 'at the first moon of the month'. In fact according to Jandī (cf. *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, p.109) it was *'fī ghurrat al-muḥarram'*, 'on the first day of the month of Muḥarram', that Ibn ᶜArabī received the announcement that he was the Seal.

113. In *Iṣṭilāḥāt* § 163 Ibn ᶜArabī defines the 'world of the Commandment', *ᶜālam al-amr*, as 'being that which has been existentiated by God without the intermediary of a secondary cause'. The reference is therefore to the world of spirits or angels (also called *ᶜālam al-ghayb*) as opposed to the *ᶜālam al-khalq* ('world of creation') or *ᶜālam al-shahāda* ('world of the visible'). Cf. also *Fut.*, II, p.129.

114. *fī mawḍiᶜ al-darb fī l-ẓahr* refers literally to the part of the back with the least fat on it. In fact according to Jandī (cf. *Sharḥ*, p.236) Ibn ᶜArabī had a cavity between his shoulders which was the size of a partridge's egg and corresponded to the comparable sign possessed by the Prophet 'in relief' at the same spot on his back.

115. *fī badr* can for Ibn ᶜArabī mean the full moon or it may refer to his companion Badr al-Ḥabashi. Given the significance of the lunar cycle in the chronology of the stages in Ibn ᶜArabī's investiture, I have opted for the first interpretation.

116. There is an obvious similarity between the turn of phrase used here—*'innanī jāmiᶜ al-amr'*—directly after the reference to the prophets, and the expression he uses at the end of the narrative in chapter 367 of the *Futūḥāt* (*innī majmūᶜ man dhukira li . . .*).

For I am the Seal of the Saints of Muḥammad,
The specific Seal in the cities and in the deserts.'[117]

These lines leave no possible room for doubt: Ibn ᶜArabī is identifying himself explicitly and categorically with the Muḥammadan Seal. What is more, in a highly condensed form the verses define his function in relation to the prophets. The Muḥammadan Seal is not a prophet. From a certain point of view he is more than that, because in his own person he represents or embodies the totality of the sainthood of all the prophets. He is, admittedly, only the Heir of Muḥammad—and yet he is the heir not just to Muḥammad's knowledge but also to his 'state': in other words to his name of saint (*walī*) which had been partially occulted by his name of messenger (*rasūl*). And finally, this poem also confirms Chodkiewicz's conjecture that the date 595 mentioned in one of the two passages from the *Futūḥāt* cited earlier is in fact a slip of the pen.[118] It was 'four years' after the episode at Tunis in 590—therefore in 594—that Ibn ᶜArabī received precise knowledge of his function as Seal.

However, this *qaṣīda* still raises two questions that are impossible to avoid. Firstly, why did Ibn ᶜArabī choose on some occasions to remain silent as to the identity of the Muḥammadan Seal, but on other occasions choose to reveal it? He himself seems to have had some difficulty explaining the apparent caprices of his pen. He repeatedly states—and this is a point we will come back to later—that the *Futūḥāt* are a work written under divine inspiration: 'By God, there is not one single letter [in this book] which was not written under divine dictation (*imlā' ilāhī*), lordly projection (*ilqā' rabbānī*) or spiritual inspiration (*nafath rūḥānī*) in the very depths of my being. This is so in spite of the fact that I am neither one of the legislative Messengers nor a commanding prophet.'[119] And he also says that this applies to all his works: 'In writing these works it has not been my intention to perform the task of a writer, nor has it been my intention to follow a precise aim. Rather, my purpose has been to free myself from an inspiration that burns my heart and crushes my chest'.[120] The following passage from the *Mawāqiᶜ al-nujūm* illustrates one of the modes of this 'lordly projection'. 'I was involved in the process of writing

117. An allusion to the universal aspect of the function of Seal of the Saints.

118. M. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, p.126.

119. *'al-anbiyā' al-mukallafīn'*: an important qualification because according to Ibn ᶜArabī the highest degree of sainthood—the *maqam al-qurba* or 'station of proximity'—also bears the name of *nubuwwa muṭlaqa* or 'general prophecy', which is distinct from *nubuwwat al-tashrīᶜ*, 'legislative prophecy', and subordinate to it. See above, chapter 3. The quotation here is from *Fut.*, III, p.456.

120. This is how Ibn ᶜArabī defines his literary production at the start of the *Fihris*. Cf. O. Yahia, *Histoire et classification*, I, p.40.

an inspired book (*kitāb ilqāᶜī*) when I was told, "Write: 'This is a chapter of subtle description and most rare unveiling'". I had no idea what to write next; I awaited the rest of the inspiration with such expectancy that I became so disturbed I was virtually at death's door. Then a luminous tablet was placed in front of me. It contained radiant green lines on which was written "This is a chapter of subtle description and most rare unveiling and the discourse regarding this chapter . . .". I copied out [what I saw] right to the end, then [the tablet] was withdrawn.'[121]

The second question is how we are to reconcile Ibn ᶜArabī's categorical assertion, in the verses quoted above, that he only realised he was the Muḥammadan Seal in 594/1198 at Fez, with Jandī's interpretation of his Cordoba vision in 586 and of the retreat he made during that same year in Seville. And, for that matter, how are we to reconcile it with Ibn ᶜArabī's own account of the vision he had in 589 at Algeciras, when he was shown his future destiny even down to specific details—details which must of course have included his nomination as Seal of the Muḥammadan saints? This apparent confusion concerning a divine grace of such major significance can hardly be explained away just in terms of a lapse of memory. Are we then to suppose that one and the same event was repeated several times over? At the risk of anticipating the contents of a report which we will examine later on we can in fact conclude that, as we can see if we read the texts carefully and in the way they should be read, there was indeed a definite series of sequential and complementary events which only found their resolution—and explanation—at Mecca in 598–99.

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'As for my companion, his is a clarity without taint, he is a pure light. He is Abyssinian, his name is ᶜAbd Allāh and he is like a full moon (*badr*) that is uneclipsed. He recognises the right due to each person and renders it to him; he assigns everyone their due without falling into excess. He has attained to the level of "distinction" (*tamyīz*). Through fusion (*sabk*) he has become purified like pure gold. His word is true, his promise veracious.' These are the terms in which, at the very start of the *Futūḥāt*, Ibn ᶜArabī describes the man who for twenty-three years was to be his inseparable companion and faithful friend: Badr al-Ḥabashī.[122] The bonds of affection that united them during all those years went far beyond the feelings of veneration and mutual respect

121. *Mawāqiᶜ al-nujūm*, p.65.

122. *Fut.*, I, p.10. Cf. Denis Gril's translation in his introduction to Ḥabashī's *Kitāb al-inbāh*, p.1, in *Annales islamologiques*, I.F.A.O. 1979, vol. XV. For Ḥabashī see *Muᶜjam al-mu'allifīn*, III, p.39.

characteristic of the normal teacher-disciple relationship.[123] From the moment that he first met up with Ibn ᶜArabī in Fez, Ḥabashī never left his master's side. From Fez to Seville, Tunis to Mecca, Damascus to Malatya, he followed him everywhere, a discreet and silent shadow. It is impossible to think of this man, once an Ethiopian slave but now free, without being reminded immediately of that other Ethiopian who used to clean the mosque and according to a tradition[124] was privately pointed out to Abū Hurayra by the Prophet as being one of the seven substitutes (*abdāl*). In fact there are a couple of references in the *Futūḥāt* which suggest that Ḥabashī was one of the four 'Pillars' (*awtād*) of his time.[125] No doubt he was no longer a young man at the time of his first encounter with Ibn ᶜArabī: he had already spent some time in the East, where he had been a disciple of a good many shaikhs,[126] and he had a close bond of affinity with Abū Yaᶜqūb al-Kūmī (one of Ibn ᶜArabī's first teachers in Andalusia), who died in Ḥabashī's home.[127]

The notoriety Ibn ᶜArabī had acquired for himself throughout the Maghreb drew to him a considerable number of disciples. They were devoted and obedient, and Ibn ᶜArabī evokes with nostalgia the time he spent in their company and the 'perpetual praise' to which they dedicated themselves. '. . . When the imām is aware of this he takes care to ensure that a group of people exists who chant the verses of the Book unceasingly, both night and day. This is what I myself did when I was in Fez, thanks to some blessed companions who had submitted to me and given me their obedience. Then I lost them and simultaneously I abandoned this pure practice, which is the noblest and most sublime of nourishments.'[128]

Among those who came to swell the ranks of Ibn ᶜArabī's disciples was the poet and philologist ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz b. Zaydān (*d.* 624/1227).[129] 'The philologist ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz b. Zaydān used to keep my company; he had become converted to God but still denied the possibility of man attaining *fanā'* [extinction in God]. One day he came looking for me in Fez and said: "Master, the *fanā'* that the Sufis speak of is indeed true, I have just experienced it myself!" "How so?", I asked. He replied: "You know that the Prince of the Faithful has

123. See esp. the verses Ibn ᶜArabī dedicated to Ḥabashī in *Fut.*, I, p.198. He wrote a good number of works—for example the *Kitāb mawāqiᶜ al-nujūm*, the *Kitāb inshā' al-dawā'ir* and the *Kitāb ḥilyat al-abdāl*, just to mention three—specifically for Ḥabashī.

124. Suyūṭī, *al-Ḥāwi li l-fatāwī*, Cairo 1959, II, p.428.

125. *Fut.*, I, pp.10, 160.

126. *Durra*, § 71, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.158.

127. *Rūḥ*, p.79; *Sufis of Andalusia*, § 2, p.69.

128. *Fut.*, III, p.334.

129. According to the author of the *Takmila* (cf. § 1771, ed. Codera), ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz b. ᶜAlī b. Zaydān excelled not only in *ḥadith*, *adab* and poetry but also in jurisprudence (*fiqh*).

arrived from Andalusia and entered the city today?" "Certainly," I answered. "Well," he said, "I left my home along with the rest of the people of Fez to watch his troops enter town. As the Prince of the Faithful passed me by and I saw him, I became extinguished to myself (*fanītu ᶜan nafsī*), to the troops and to everything perceived by man; I no longer heard the clashing of the cymbals or the banging of the drums, not even the noise of the rattles or the hubbub of the crowd. My eyes no longer saw anyone in the world except the Prince of the Faithful. What's more, nobody jostled me or bumped into me even though I was in the path of the cavalry and the people in the crowd were pushing against each other. I no longer saw myself and I was no longer even aware that I was looking at the Prince, because I was annihilated to myself . . .".'[130] The Almohad Sultan whose return was celebrated with such enthusiasm by the people of Fez was Manṣūr, who left Andalusia for the last time in Jumādā I 594/1198 to return to Marrakech, where he died soon afterwards.[131]

A good number of Ibn ᶜArabī's works are concerned with the rules of *sulūk*: the conditions and obligations incumbent upon anyone entering the Path. The *Kitāb al-kunh*,[132] the *Kitāb al-amr*,[133] *al-waṣiyya*[134] and *al-waṣāyā*,[135] as well as some sections of the *Tadbīrāt*[136] and *Mawāqiᶜ al-nujūm*,[137] to cite only these, define for the *sālik* or wayfarer a body of precepts which he must conform to if he wants to reach the end of his quest. These works are essentially concerned with setting out the fundamental principles of *tarbiya* or spiritual training as described in all the classical manuals written before Ibn ᶜArabī's time. Strict observance of the *sharīᶜa* is, needless to say, the condition *sine qua non* for success; acquisition of the 'noble virtues' (*makārim al-akhlāq*) such as leniency, humility, generosity and 'chivalry' (*futuwwa*) are indispensable for spiritual progress; asceticism (*al-zuhd*)—which implies

130. *Fut.*, II, p.514.

131. *Sevilla islámica*, p.169.

132. *Kitāb al-kunh fī mā lā budda lil murīd minhu*, Cairo 1967.

133. *Kitāb al-amr al-muḥkam al-marbūṭ fī mā yalzam ahl ṭarīq Allāh*; partial edition at the end of the *Dhakhā'ir al-aᶜlāq*, Cairo 1968, and partial translation by Asín Palacios in *Islam cristianizado*, pp.300–51.

134. *Kitāb al-waṣiyya*, in *Rasā'il*, Hyderabad 1948; French trans. by Michel Vâlsan in *Études traditionnelles*, September–December 1968.

135. *Kitāb al-waṣāyā*, in *Rasā'il* (not to be confused with the *bāb al-waṣāyā* in the *Futūḥāt*); trans. by Michel Vâlsan in *Études traditionnelles*, April, May and June 1952.

136. *Tadbīrāt ilāhiyya* (ed. Nyberg, pp.226–240); the chapter in question has been translated by Michel Vâlsan in *Études traditionnelles*, March and June 1962, and by Asín Palacios, *Islam cristianizado*, pp.352–70.

137. For a partial translation cf. Asín Palacios, *Islam cristianizado*, pp.378–432. There will be more to say later about the composition of this work.

fasting, staying awake, seclusion and silence[138]—plus the constant practice of *dhikr* will make it possible for the disciple to succeed, but only on condition that everything is done under the direction of a spiritual guide (*murshid*) to whom he has devoted himself body and soul. In these works Ibn ᶜArabī compiles a long list of rules of propriety (*adab*) which the disciple must observe with regard to his teacher, but these can all be summed up in the one sentence from the *Tadbīrāt*: 'You must only want what your teacher wants'.[139] There are a number of indications suggesting that Ibn ᶜArabī himself was probably strict as a teacher towards his disciples. We have already seen that he forbade them to appeal to any form of *rukhṣa* or 'legal toleration', and if it so happened that they made some commitment to God by taking a vow he would not allow them any excuse for breaking their pact.[140] These demands were insisted on in direct proportion to the disciple's ambition; in no way do they contradict Ibn ᶜArabī's indulgent and caring stance towards the community taken as a whole which was discussed earlier on—where the object is not to increase the burden imposed on the believer. For those who claim they belong to a spiritual élite, no concessions and no alleviations are to be granted.

We also happen to know that Ibn ᶜArabī strictly prohibited disciples from participating in *samāᶜ*-s or communal spiritual recitals. These seem to have been a very widespread practice in his time, and we must not forget that he himself had once attended them; but he attacks them virulently in several of his works.[141] In one place he declares: 'This practice was never appropriate for Sufis and has only been introduced recently by libertines . . .. They practise *samāᶜ*, as if it was an exercise in devotion and piety, but in fact they are just people who take religion as a joke and a game, taking advantage of beardless youths to further their perverse intentions and villainy . . .. And, similarly, examination of all the references to *samāᶜ* made by all Sufis from the first to the last shows that the practice really only serves to satisfy the appetite of the senses in spite of the fact that from a legal point of view it is a perfectly acceptable activity'.[142] Similarly, Ibn ᶜArabī did not permit *shāhid bāzī*,[143] the

138. Ibn ᶜArabī wrote a short treatise specifically on these four 'pillars' of asceticism: cf. the *Kitāb ḥilyat al-abdāl*, in *Rasā'il*, Hyderabad 1948, trans. by Michel Vâlsan, Paris 1950.

139. *Tadbīrāt ilāhiyya*, p.227; *Islam cristianizado*, p.357.

140. Cf. *Fut.*, I, pp.722–23 and above, chapter 2; also *Kitāb al-amr*, in *Islam cristianizado*, p.318, where in matters of jurisprudence Ibn ᶜArabī instructs the disciple to reject those solutions which have given rise to differences of opinion among the doctors of the Law and only adopt those that have met with unanimous approval. This is precisely the opposite of the position he demands should be adopted with regard to the community as a whole.

141. Cf. e.g. *Fut.*, I, p.210; IV, p.270; *Rūḥ*, preface, pp.27, 44.

142. *Kitāb al-amr*, in *Islam cristianizado*, pp.327–8.

143. A Persian expression; its equivalent in Arabic is *al-naẓar ilā l-murd*.

contemplation of beautiful young men as an aid to provoking ecstasy (*wajd*). 'As for the use of a "witness", in other words a young beardless man, this is the most serious of pitfalls and the most immoral form of wickedness.'[144]

Among the spiritual exercises recommended by Ibn ᶜArabī, the practice of *muḥāsaba* or examination of one's conscience occupies a special place. It will be remembered that he received this practice from two of his Andalusian teachers who used to note down every evening all their actions during that day. But Ibn ᶜArabī was even more demanding: he invited disciples to follow his own example by examining their thoughts as well as their actions. 'You must demand that your soul account for itself, and you must verify the thoughts which crossed your mind at various moments in the day—all this while feeling shame with regard to God.'[145]

Regarding the kind of *dhikr* used and recommended by Ibn ᶜArabī, it would seem that he adopted different ones during the course of his life. To begin with he had followed the example set by his master ᶜUryabī and had used the Name 'Allāh' as his *dhikr*, preferring it to any other. 'This Name [Allāh] used to be (*kāna*) the *dhikr* I practised, and it was the one used by the master through whom I entered the Way. The merit of this invocation is greater than all the merits resulting from other forms of invocation, because God has said: "The mention of 'Allāh' is greater" (Qur'ān 29:45) and because He did not speak of any other forms of *dhikr* in spite of all the existing forms of invocation by Divine Names. So it is that the men of God have chosen this Name [Allāh] on its own as an invocatory formula by itself. It produces in the heart a sublime effect which is not achieved by any other form of invocation.'[146] Ibn ᶜArabī's particular turn of phrase here (*kāna dhikrunā* as opposed to *huwa dhikrunā*) would seem to indicate that he had stopped practising *dhikr* using the Name 'Allāh'. Another passage in the *Futūḥāt*, which was written later because it comes in the very last chapter of the work, the *bāb al-waṣāyā* or 'chapter of recommendations', confirms this hypothesis because it shows that the Shaikh al-Akbar had finally given preference to the *shahāda* formula, *'lā ilāha illā llāh'*. 'Repeat unceasingly the declaration of Islam, which is "there is no god apart from God". This is indeed the best of invocations (*afḍal al-adhkār*) by virtue of the increase in knowledge that it produces . . .. There can be no doubt that the Messenger of God said: "The best statement we have made—both I and the prophets who preceded me—is 'There is no god apart from God' (*afḍalu mā qultu . . .*)".'[147] 'In saying "*mā*" he meant to indicate the merit of those who are also attached to the practice of *dhikr* using the

144. *Kitāb al-amr*, in *Islam cristianizado*, pp.328.
145. *Kitāb al-kunh*, p.7; *Fut.*, IV, p.450.
146. *Fut.*, III, p.300.
147. Cf. *Muwaṭṭa'*, *qur'ān* 32, *ḥajj* 246.

Names "Allāh" or "He" (*huwa*), which are among the utterances [spoken by the prophets]; and yet the most excellent of these utterances among those who are knowers in God is "*lā ilāha illā llāh*".'[148]

We happen to know that on one point at least Ibn ᶜArabī differed from other shaikhs where *tarbiya* or spiritual training is concerned. According to him other teachers were wrong in placing the emphasis on *ghinā' billāh* or self-sufficiency through God. He himself advocated *faqr ilā llāh* or poverty in God, which, he explains, is the ontological quality of created beings (*ṣifatuhum al-ḥaqīqiyya*). 'As for my companions, they have received this from me and have realised it in themselves . . .. After I had taught it to my spiritual children and they had recognised its importance and so become acquainted with what most gnostics are unaware of, they received an immense benefit and thanks to this benefit committed no impropriety with regard to God.'[149]

'Do not approach the gates of the sultan.'[150] As we will see, Ibn ᶜArabī showed himself inflexible where this principle is concerned—a principle he lays down in the *Kitāb al-kunh* and one which had frequently been expressed by other Sufis before him. Everything that in one way or another is linked with power is to be held in contempt by the disciple. This is well illustrated by the following rather lengthy anecdote reported by Ibn ᶜArabī in the *Rūḥ al-quds*;[151] it concerns Shaikh ᶜAbd Allāh b. Ibrāhīm al-Mālaqī al-Qalfāṭ, whom Ibn ᶜArabī had met for the first time at Tarifa in 589/1193. 'One day when this shaikh was in Ceuta together with Ibn Ṭarīf, Sultan Abū l-ᶜAlā'[152] sent me two loads of provisions when I happened not to be in. Some brothers who had come to see me helped themselves to the food and ate it, but my own disciples (*khawāṣṣ aṣḥābī*) did not touch it. The following evening the sultan again sent me two loads of food, which I neither accepted nor refused. Some brothers had come to my place specifically (*bi-l-qaṣd*), because they knew the sultan was sending me food. I gave the call to prayer and did the night prayer itself. One of the brothers, who fancied he belonged to the rank of the Masters, said to me: "One does not perform the prayer when the meal is served". I remained silent, and my silence angered him. I then said to him: "I did not accept this food and I have no intention of eating it because as far as I am

148. *Fut.*, IV, p.448. 149. *Fut.*, III, p.19. 150. *Kitāb al-kunh*, p.9.
151. *Rūḥ*, pp.120–1; *Sufis of Andalusia*, § 26, pp.129–130.
152. This is probably Sultan Abū l-Alā' Idrīs al-Akbar, who was governor of Ceuta before becoming ruler between 624 and 629 under the name of Ma'mūn. It was he who officially abrogated Ibn Tumart's doctrine (cf. above, p.82, n.27); in his *Dhayl* (vol. VIII, ii, Rabat 1984, p.415) Ibn ᶜAbd al-Malik al-Marrākushī describes an incident in which Abū l-ᶜAlā'—at the time still governor of Ceuta—was confronted by the Sufi Ibn Ṣā'igh al-Anṣārī and was finally obliged to yield to his wishes.

concerned it is illicit (*ḥarām*), and I cannot possibly tell you to eat it because I want for you what I want for myself". I went on to explain in what respect the food seemed to me to be illicit, then I said to them: "This food is ready. Those who consider it licit may eat it; the rest may abstain". I returned to the house where I happened to be staying at the time, taking my disciples with me. The next day the brother in question went to the vizier and denounced me . . .. The matter was brought to the sultan, who was an intelligent man. He declared: "My intention was solely to do good, but this man knows his own condition better. Consequently I will do him no harm and will not cause him trouble in any way whatsoever"; and he had the complaint withdrawn. The story of these events reached the ears of my friend al-Qalfāṭ, who came to see me. Aware of the gravity of the situation, he was afraid for me and for my companions and rebuked me, saying: "As far as you yourself are concerned you have done well, but this will prove detrimental to our community as a whole because people here will never accept such behaviour!" I replied to him: "The right of God comes first!" (*ḥaqqu llāh aḥaqq*). Then I made a gesture with my hand and stood up as a sign that he was to leave. Subsequently I met Ibn Ṭarīf, who was aware of what had happened. He said to me: "Diplomacy first of all!" I replied: "Agreed—provided the essential is preserved".'

There are several inferences to be drawn from this story. First of all, one notes that the instinctive reaction of Ibn ᶜArabī's disciples in his absence was to refuse the food offered by the sultan. This shows quite clearly that he must have placed particular emphasis on this issue in his teaching. Secondly, the anecdote is evidence both for the concern of the Almohad authorities to ally themselves with Sufi circles and also for the esteem in which these authorities held Ibn ᶜArabī—whom, it will be remembered, Sultan Manṣūr had hoped to take into his service.

One other anecdote, from the *Futūḥāt* this time, confirms this last point. '. . . I had experience of this situation in Tunis, in Ifrīqiya. One of the greatest worthies of the town—his name was Ibn Muᶜtib—invited me to his house to do me honour. I accepted his invitation. When I arrived at his place and we were preparing to eat, he asked me to intercede on his behalf with the sultan (*ṣāḥib al-balad*) because I exerted influence and a certain authority over him (*kuntu maqbūl al-qawl ᶜindahu wa mutaḥakkiman*). I agreed to do so and left the room without accepting the food or the gifts he had prepared for me. I did what he had asked me to do, and he was restored to power.'[153]

Finally, one notes that when it became a question of defending the 'right of God' (*ḥaqqu llāh*) the Shaikh al-Akbar did not hesitate to take his stand against two Sufis who in other respects were friends of his. All this makes one

153. *Fut.*, IV, p.489.

wonder what his reasons were for adopting such a guarded and even critical attitude with regard to the Almohad authorities, which he appears to have considered corrupt (*fāsid*), whereas in the East his attitude to the ruling princes—both Seljuq and Ayyūbid—was to prove far more conciliatory. Was this because he regarded the Almohad government (which, it will be remembered, had been founded by Ibn Tumart who himself claimed to be the Mahdī) as illegitimate? If this had been the case there is every reason to suppose that Ibn ᶜArabī would have written or said so, especially in the works he composed during his oriental period. But we find nothing of the kind. Most probably this variation in his attitude was determined by factors of spiritual opportuneness. The Almohad Empire in the West was doomed to disappear sooner or later, and in one way or another Ibn ᶜArabī was aware of the fact. But on his arrival in the East he was, as we will see later, to be consecrated as Seal of the Saints; and simultaneously he was invested by God in quite specific terms with an advisory capacity, or *naṣīḥa*, relating to the community as a whole—and that included its leaders.

As for those favoured disciples of Ibn ᶜArabī who abstained from joining in the meal, Ḥabashī was doubtless one of them even though he is not explicitly named: from a passage in the *Futūḥāt* we learn that he was accompanying his teacher at the time of his arrival at Ceuta in 594, which is when the incident is most likely to have taken place. Ibn ᶜArabī had just left Fez, where he had been imprudent enough to reveal a divine secret (he leaves us in the dark as to what it was) to a large number of companions. 'God had communicated one of His secrets to me in Fez in 594. I had divulged it, unaware that it is one of the divine secrets which are not to be told to others. I was reprimanded by the Beloved, and instead of giving any reply I held my silence. Finally I said to Him: "You sort out this problem with those to whom I confided the secret, because it is You who are jealous about it; You have the power to do so, not I!" I had revealed the secret to about eighteen men. He said to me: "I will deal with it". Subsequently, after I had arrived in Ceuta, He told me that He had removed the secret from their breasts and deprived them of it. I said to my companion ᶜAbd Allāh al-Ḥabashī: "God tells me He has done such-and-such a thing; let's go to Fez to see for ourselves".[154] So I went there, and when these people came to see me I perceived that God had indeed deprived them of the secret.'[155] After verifying this Ibn ᶜArabī left Fez and returned to Andalusia in the company of Ḥabashī.

The events that punctuated this long stay in the Maghreb culminated, as

154. As a matter of interest it is worth noting that, according to Idrīsī, Fez was eight days' journey from Ceuta (*Nuzhat al-mushtāq*, trans. R. Dozy and M.J. de Goeje, p.204).

155. *Fut.*, II, p.348; cf. also II, p.633.

we have seen, in the Night Journey of 594 and in Ibn ʿArabī's nomination as Seal of Muḥammadan Sainthood. They were events which prompted him to make decisions which may not have changed the world but certainly were to change the face of Sufism. One of these decisions was his resolve to transmit in writing for the sake of all saints to come the sacred knowledge of which he was the heir and guardian. One example of such a writing is the *Kitāb al-ʿanqā' al-mughrib*, composed in 595 and devoted—as is clear from its complete title, 'The Astounded Phoenix, regarding the Seal of the Saints and the Sun of the West'—to the question of the Seal (*khatm*). His other decision was to leave the West for the East, there to spread his teaching.

7. Farewells

By the time he had returned to Spain, accompanied by the faithful Ḥabashī, Ibn ʿArabī would seem already to have made up his mind to leave the West for the East, the Maghreb for the Mashreq. This is the implication of a letter in the *Kitāb al-kutub*, Ibn ʿArabī's 'Correspondence'.[1] The information in this letter, plus the corroboration of some of the details provided by the *Rūḥ al-quds*, allows us not only to retrace with a fair degree of accuracy Ibn ʿArabī's itinerary during his many wanderings through Andalusia in 595/1198 but also to conclude that in his mind he was making a final visit to his homeland, and that it was his intention to say goodbye to his teachers before he left. We do not know exactly to whom the letter in question was addressed, but the text shows that the person was a shaikh whom the author had very recently spent some time with in the Maghreb. He may have been Abū Yaḥyā b. Abī Bakr al-Ṣanhājī—a man for whom he had written the *ʿAnqā' mughrib* in the same year (595) and together with whom, as he says in the *Rūḥ*, he had numerous conversations about the 'essential truths' (*ḥaqā'iq*).[2] But whatever the case may be, one thing for certain is that the letter was written in 595 on Ibn ʿArabī's return from Fez. After enumerating for the sake of his correspondent the many shaikhs whom he had visited in Andalusia since taking leave of him in the Maghreb, Ibn ʿArabī brings the letter to a close by announcing: 'Here ends the list of all those I have met, and in future I will not visit anyone for as long as I remain here' (*lā azūru aḥadan baʿdahā mā baqītu*).[3] Now if one examines Ibn ʿArabī's writings one notes that all references to

1. *Kitāb al-kutub*, in *Rasā'il*, Hyderabad 1948, pp.5–10.

2. *Rūḥ*, § 29, p.122; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.132–3. This shaikh, who lived and died in the Maghreb, is not to be confused with the Ṣanhājī who is the subject of *Rūḥ* § 5, and who lived and died in Andalusia. Tādilī devotes a biographical sketch to him (*Tashawwuf*, § 152, p.307), but has him die at Marrakech in 'approximately the year 590'; however, as the *Kitāb ʿanqā' mughrib* was written for him in 595, he must have died some time later.

3. *Kitāb al-kutub*, p.10.

encounters of his in Andalusia come to a stop in, precisely, 595. The references continue in 597—but in Morocco.

After saying farewell to the anonymous addressee of this letter, Ibn ᶜArabī tells how he continued on his way until he arrived at Qaṣr Kutāma (Alcazarquivir),[4] a fortress some ninety kilometres to the south of Tangiers; there he met Shaikh ᶜAbd al-Jalīl b. Mūsā who, as we have seen, was a disciple of Ibn Ghālib. He then crossed the Strait—he does not state whether he set sail from Ceuta or from Ksar—and arrived in Algeciras, where he again saw Shaikh Ibn Ṭarīf.[5] Next he kept going until he came to Ronda; there he visited a certain Abū l-Ḥasan al-Qanawī (or al-Khūnī)[6] who, as he states in the *Rūḥ*, followed the Path of Chivalry (*futuwwa*). At this point he appears to have forgotten to tell his correspondent that at Ronda he also met his friend and teacher Abū ᶜAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ashraf al-Rundī: it will be remembered that he had formed a link with this man in 589, and he was determined to introduce him to Ḥabashī. 'I had for a long time wanted to introduce him to my companion ᶜAbd Allāh Badr al-Ḥabashī. Well, when we arrived in Andalusia we went to Ronda, where we attended a funeral ceremony. During the prayer I noticed that Abū ᶜAbd Allāh [al-Rundī] was there, and I introduced him to my companion ᶜAbd Allāh [al-Ḥabashī]; I then went back to the place where I was staying. Al-Ḥabashī voiced his wish to see the shaikh do one of his miracles. When the sunset hour arrived we performed the prayer; then, as the person whose place we were staying at had not yet got round to lighting the lamp, my companion ᶜAbd Allāh al-Ḥabashī asked for some light. "All right", said Abū ᶜAbd Allāh [al-Rundī]. He grabbed a handful of grass that was lying in the house, and while we watched him he struck it with his finger, saying: "Here's some light!" The grass caught fire and we were able to light the lamp.'[7]

From Ronda Ibn ᶜArabī and Ḥabashī carried on until they arrived in Seville, where they went to offer their greetings to Ibn Qassūm, ᶜAbd Allāh al-Mawrūrī and Abū ᶜImrān al-Mīrtūlī.[8] Something said to them by al-Mawrūrī confirms that the greetings were in fact a farewell. As Ibn ᶜArabī notes in the *Rūḥ*, 'He said to me in the presence of my companion ᶜAbd Allāh Badr al-Ḥabashī, "I used to fear for you because of your youthfulness, because of the absence of help as a result of the corruption so rampant in our times, and because of the degeneration I have noticed in the people of our Way; it is on

4. Ibid., p.8; *Durra*, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.160.
5. *Kitāb al-kutub*, p.9; *Rūḥ*, § 25, p.120.
6. Hesitatingly spelt *al-Khūnī* by the editor of the *Kitāb al-kutub*, p.9, but *al-Qanawī* in *Rūḥ*, § 33, p.122. In *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.134, Austin opts for the spelling Qānūnī.
7. *Rūḥ*, § 18, pp.112–13; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.119.
8. *Kitāb al-kutub*, p.9; *Rūḥ*, §§ 7, 8, 14.

account of these factors that I have preferred to live as a recluse. But praise be to God who has consoled me through you!"'[9]

The next stop on Ibn ᶜArabī's itinerary as outlined by him in his *Risāla* remains more or less obscure. The editor of the *Kitāb al-kutub* is uncertain about the spelling of the city in question but supposes it was Cordoba;[10] Ibn ᶜArabī's description of it—he refers to it as the 'venerated' city and as a place of 'sublime contemplations', which is probably an allusion to his own experiences there—appears to confirm the hypothesis. It was in this city that he met a certain Abū ᶜAbd Allāh al-Astanī, a person who so far has unfortunately proved unidentifiable. On the other hand, we do happen to know from a passage in the *Futūḥāt*[11] that Ibn ᶜArabī's arrival coincided with the burial of Averroes; he had died a short while earlier at Marrakech, on 9 Ṣafar 595 (11 December 1198), and his remains had been transported back to his home town. Together with the author Ibn Jubayr (*d.* 614/1217) and his disciple Ibn al-Sarrāj, Ibn ᶜArabī attended the philosopher's burial.

From Cordoba the two travellers left for Granada—four days' walk away according to Idrīsī. There they lodged with Shaikh Abū Muḥammad al-Shakkāz[12] and were soon joined by ᶜAbd Allāh al-Mawrūrī, who told them in detail about a miracle he himself had performed in the same town on an earlier occasion.[13] Ibn ᶜArabī compared Shaikh al-Shakkāz to his own uncle Abū Muslim al-Khawlānī on account of his zeal and self-mortifications, and from his encounter with him retained above anything else the following definition of the four types of spiritual men: a definition phrased in accordance with the four aspects or meanings of the Qur'ān as enumerated in a famous *ḥadīth*. 'According to al-Shakkāz, there are those who "have been faithful to the pact they made with God" (Qur'ān 33:23); these are the "men of the apparent" (*rijāl al-ẓāhir*). Then there are those who "are not distracted from the invocation of God by either trade or business" (Qur'ān 24:37): these are the "men of the interior" (*rijāl al-bāṭin*). Then there are those of the "Aᶜrāf" (Qur'ān 7:46): these are the "men of the limit" (*rijāl al-ḥadd*) .... And finally there are those who "come to God on foot when He calls them" (Qur'ān 22:27): these are the "men of the ascent" (*rijāl al-maṭlaᶜ* or *rijāl al-muṭṭalaᶜ*).'[14]

9. *Rūḥ*, p.91; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.88.
10. *Kitāb al-kutub*, p.9.
11. *Fut.*, I, p.154.
12. *Kitāb al-kutub*, p.10; *Rūḥ*, § 15, p.106; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.110–12.
13. *Rūḥ*, § 14, p.101; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.102–3; *Mawāqiᶜ al-nujūm*, p. 108.
14. *Fut.*, I, p.187 and IV, p.9, where Ibn ᶜArabī states that the meeting with Shakkāz took place at Granada in 595. The *ḥadīth* in question does not appear in the canonical collections, but it is given by Ghazālī (*Iḥyā' ᶜulūm al-dīn*, Cairo ed., I, p.99; *Kitāb qawāᶜid al-ᶜaqā'id*, 2nd faṣl) on the authority of Ibn Ḥibbān.

Next Ibn ᶜArabī left Granada for his town of birth, Murcia. There he met Ibn Saydabūn, a famous disciple of Abū Madyan who at the time of their meeting was evidently going through a period of *fatra*, or abandonment:[15] 'His Beloved had abandoned him and his Friend had taken an aversion to him . . . for reasons that can only be communicated orally and face to face; and yet the shaikh's objectives were commendable and his efforts righteous. However, the power over the world which had been conferred upon him had slipped from his hands . . .. When I left him he wept, so distressed he was to see me go, and he accompanied me some of the way so as to bid me farewell'. Here again, Ibn Saydabūn's behaviour shows rather clearly that he was aware of the fact that Ibn ᶜArabī's departure was for good and that he would never see him again.

With the description of this last meeting Ibn ᶜArabī's letter comes to an end; in it he specifies that from this time onwards he no longer visited anyone else. But his renunciation of *ziyāra* or visits did not mean renouncing *siyāḥa*, or wanderings. Scarcely had he arrived in Murcia before he took off again for Almeria, four days' walk away; there his arrival coincided with the start of the month of Ramaḍān for the year 595/1199. Here in Almeria, as a result of a divine inspiration corroborated by a dream on the part of his disciple Ḥabashī, he composed the *Kitāb mawāqiᶜ al-nujūm* within the space of eleven days.[16] Ibn ᶜArabī himself attached considerable significance to this work, in which he deals with the eight parts of the body (eyes, ears, tongue, hands, belly, genitals, feet and heart), with the way in which each of them is made subject to *taklīf* or legal obligation, and with the types of miracle and revelation that correspond to them. As he says in the *Futūḥāt*: 'This book obviates the need for a teacher; or I would go even further and say that it is indispensable for any teacher, because among teachers there are some who are great and some who are even greater, and this work derives from the most elevated station which it is possible for a teacher to attain to'.[17] A passage from the *Mawāqiᶜ al-nujūm* itself would seem to explain in what sense the treatise can act as substitute for a teacher: 'The knowledge or science of the obligations incumbent upon these parts of the body is the knowledge of those actions which lead to the state of bliss'.[18] As regards the composition of the *Mawāqiᶜ al-nujūm*, it is also worth noting that to begin with it did not include the chapter on the heart, which is so obviously essential. In the *Kitāb ḥilyat al-*

15. *Kitāb al-kutub*, p.10; cf. also *Fut.*, I, p.708 and IV, p.497, where Ibn ᶜArabī mentions his visit to Murcia in 595. For Ibn Saydabūn see Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Iḥāṭa*, Cairo 1319, I, p.291; Massignon, *Passion*, II, pp.326–27.

16. *Mawāqiᶜ al-nujūm*, p.5.

17. *Fut.*, I, p.334; IV, p.263.

18. *Mawāqiᶜ*, p.34.

abdāl Ibn ᶜArabī explains: 'I added it in Bougie, in 597; but already a large number of copies lacking this particular section had been circulated throughout the country'.[19] This is a significant statement. Firstly, it shows that even during his own lifetime Ibn ᶜArabī's works were widely disseminated throughout the Islamic West; secondly, it confirms that in some cases he felt moved to complete or modify works he had written several years previously. As was mentioned earlier, this is a point to be borne in mind when trying to establish a firm basis for the dating of his writings and when attempting to resolve the apparent contradictions between conflicting chronological allusions, because it shows how carefully one needs to proceed.

After the month of Ramaḍān, 595, we lose all trace of Ibn ᶜArabī until we meet up with him again at the start of 597/1200, in the Maghreb. What did he do during this long interim period? Did he keep travelling? If that is what he did, he would inevitably have encountered Sufis at some time or other; and yet, as was noted earlier, nowhere in his entire writings do we find even the slightest reference to any meeting, or indeed to any event at all, during the year 596. In fact the date 596 appears never to be mentioned in any of his works. Everything tends to suggest that during the course of this year the Shaikh al-Akbar withdrew completely from the world. Faced with such a total absence of information we are justified in assuming that he spent the year in a state of extreme retirement, perhaps devoting himself to writing, to retreats, and to preparations for his great departure.

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As for the time of Ibn ᶜArabī's definitive departure from Andalusia, we can be confident that it happened either towards the end of 596 or at the beginning of 597/1200. At any rate, in 597 we find him again in Morocco, more specifically in Salé. In his description of his 'teacher-disciple' Abū Yaᶜqūb Yūsuf al-Kūmī in the *Rūḥ al-quds* he says that he left this shaikh (*fāraqtuhu*) at Salé to continue on his way to Marrakech (*wa anā mutawajjih ilā Marrākush*), and that he composed a farewell poem for the occasion.[20] In fact we know from elsewhere that Ibn ᶜArabī arrived in the Almohad capital in 597/1200—and that new adventures were awaiting him. According to Idrīsī it was nine days' walk from Salé to Marrakech. Half-way between the two towns the traveller crossed the valley of Umm Rabī, where there were two villages with Berber names that are spelt differently according to different

19. *Ḥilyat al-abdāl*, in *Rasā'il*, p.8.

20. *Rūḥ*, p.82; the passage is not translated in *Sufis of Andalusia*.

authors; the first is called Ījīsal or Jīsīl,[21] the second Anjāl or Anqāl.[22] According to Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt (*d.* 600/1203) the second Mu'minid sultan, Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf, had a house in the first of these two villages;[23] the village itself, now called Guisser, still survives today. As for the other village—spelt 'Anqāl' by Idrīsī, 'Anjāl' by Ibn ʿArabī—we happen to know from Idrīsī that it was close to Ījīsal, present-day Guisser. It was here, in Ījīsal, that Ibn ʿArabī broke his journey; the name of this little Berber village, where he stopped off one day in Muḥarram 597 (October–November 1200), was to remain engraved in his memory forever afterwards. Indeed, for him its name was to evoke one of the most significant episodes in his spiritual destiny: the occasion when he attained to the *maqām al-qurba*, the station of Proximity. 'I attained to this station [of Proximity] in the month of Muḥarram, 597, while I was travelling, at a stop called Ījīsal in Morocco. In my joy I started wandering around in this station; but I saw no one in it apart from myself and this solitude frightened me . . ..

'So, when I had entered this station (*maqām*), found myself alone and realised that if anybody was to appear to me in it he would not recognise me, I started exploring its nooks and crannies. Although I had realised this station as well as is granted by God to those who attain it, I did not know its name. I saw the commands of God manifest themselves to me and I saw His ambassadors descend upon me, seeking my company and friendship. In the state of fear caused by my isolation (because there can only really be friendship between beings of the same species), I continued on my way.

'In a place called Anjāl I performed the afternoon prayer in its mosque, and there I met one of the men of the Path. The Emir Abū Yaḥyā b. Wajtān arrived; he was one of my friends, was glad to see me and invited me to spend the night at his place. But I refused his offer and stayed instead with his secretary, a man with whom I was linked by bonds of friendship. I complained to him about my isolation in a *maqām* which in other respects delighted me. While he was consoling me I saw someone's shadow. I rose from my bed and went towards it, hoping to receive some solace from it. It embraced me; I looked at it closely and saw that it was Abū ʿAbd Raḥmān al-

21. Idrīsī (*d.* approx. 560/1165) gives the spelling Ījīsal, adding that the village was particularly pretty and had many springs (*Nuzhat al-mushtāq*, ed. Hadj Sadok, p.80); so too Tādilī, *Tashawwuf*, § 243, p.423. Ibn Ṣāḥib al-Ṣalāt spells the name of the village Jīsal, specifying that Sultan Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf stopped off there in 566; the editor of the *Mann bi l-imāma* explains that the village in question is Guisser (*Mann*, II, p.443). For the exact location of the town cf. A. Tawfīq's map of Morocco at the end of the *Tashawwuf*.

22. Idrīsī, *Nuzhat al-mushtāq*, ed. Hadj Sadok, p.80; Ibn ʿArabī (*Fut.*, II, p.261) gives the spelling Anjāl.

23. *Mann*, II, p.443.

Sulamī,[24] whose spirit had assumed corporeal form for my sake. God had sent him out of compassion for me. I said to him: "I see that you [too] are in this station!" His reply was: "It was while I was in this station that I was overtaken by death, and I will never cease to be here". I told him of my isolation and complained about the absence of any companion. He said to me: "He who is in exile always feels alone! Now that divine providence has granted you access to this station praise God, for to how many people is this given, brother of mine? Are you satisfied with the fact that Khaḍir[25] is your companion in this station?" . . . I replied: "Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, I know of no name to designate this station". He answered: "It is called the station of Proximity (*maqām al-qurba*). Realise it in its fullness!".'[26] It must be remembered that the 'station of Proximity' is only accessible to the *afrād* or 'solitary ones', and is the highest station of sainthood: according to Ibn ʿArabī it is the most elevated spiritual rank to which a saint (*walī*) can ever attain. It is situated immediately below the station of legislative prophecy (*nubuwwat al-tashrīʿ*) and, as we saw earlier, is also called by Ibn ʿArabī the station of general prophecy (*al-nubuwwa al-ʿāmma*).

Comforted by what Sulamī had told him, Ibn ʿArabī resumed his journey until he came to Marrakech, a city which—founded by the Almoravid sultan Yūsuf b. Tāshifīn at the beginning of the eleventh century, partly demolished and then rebuilt by Sultan ʿAbd al-Mu'min (who ordered the construction of the famous Kutubiyya mosque)—had been chosen as capital for the Almohad Empire.[27] In the year 597/1200 it was the home of Sultan al-Nāṣir Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb. Nāṣir had succeeded to the throne when his father Manṣūr died in 595/1199, shortly after the death of the philosopher Averroes whom he had disgraced in 592 but then recalled to court. After thirty-five years of rule Manṣūr left his son a vast empire, but a fragile one. Admittedly he had managed to hold the forces of Castile in check after the victory at Alarcos and the signing of the truce in 593. However, the Reconquista was only temporarily contained; less than fifteen years after his death the Christians were to crush the Almohads at Las Navas de Tolosa. Also, Manṣūr had not been able to stem the Almoravid revolt by the Banū Ghāniya, who during the reign of his successor continued ravaging Ifrīqiya and even took Tunis in 600/1203.[28] Within the Almohad realm itself he had established an extensive administrative structure run by men he could trust,

24. The author of the *Ṭabaqāt al-awliyā'*, who died in 421/1030.

25. It will be remembered that Khaḍir is one of the *afrād* or 'solitary ones' who are unique precisely because they are granted access to this 'station of Proximity'.

26. *Fut.*, II, p.261.

27. For Marrakech cf. *EI*², s.v.

28. Cf. the article by R. le Tourneau in *EI*² s.v. Ghāniya.

and whom he advised his successor to retain.[29] In the sphere of architecture Manṣūr's name, like his father's, is still associated with a number of achievements. He brought to completion the famous Giralda at Seville as well as the Kutubiyya in Marrakech, and simultaneously began work on the expansion of the capital. Finally he totally transformed Rabat, endowing it with two long walls plus the famous Ḥasan mosque which was intended to be the twin sister of the Giralda and Kutubiyya mosques but was never completed; even so its minaret—still to be seen today—bears undying witness to its former splendour. Of all these projects, Marrākushī[30] gives pride of place to the magnificent hospital that the sultan had built in Marrakech and then used to go to every Friday, to visit the sick who were cared for there, accommodated and fed for free. Ibn ᶜIdhārī praises the sultan for instituting the compulsory wearing of a distinctive garment by Jews in the same year that he died. In his *Bayān* he makes no bones of his approval for the sultan's initiative: 'Amongst his [i.e. Manṣūr's] best-known merits is the fact that he made it compulsory for Jews to wear a distinctive garment. Jews had in fact had the audacity to wear Muslim dress and assume the appearance of nobility by the clothing they wore. In their outer behaviour they resembled the people [i.e. Muslims] and it was no longer possible to distinguish between them and the faithful servants of God. This is why Manṣūr imposed on them the wearing of a characteristic garment similar to the mourning garment worn by widows. He lengthened their gowns by a span's breadth and length, specifying that they should be blue in colour with blue hoods and blue bonnets'.[31]

The reign of Manṣūr's son Nāṣir marked the beginning of the period of decline. It was to be the period of a great defeat: the defeat of the Almohad army by the forces of Castile in 609/1213 at Las Navas de Tolosa. However, in the year 597/1200 Marrakech still glittered for the time being, and no one was to suspect that the Empire was drawing to its close.

For anyone familiar with Islamic hagiography the name of Marrakech — sometimes referred to as 'Tomb of the Saints'—is virtually inseparable from the name of its 'patron', Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-Sabtī (*d.* 601/1205), whom Ibn ᶜArabī promptly went to visit while passing through the city.[32] Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-Sabtī was originally from Ceuta; he had first settled in the suburbs of Marrakech but subsequently, at the request of Sultan Manṣūr who was particularly keen on allying himself with Sufi circles, he ended up moving

29. For Manṣūr's legacy cf. Huici Miranda, *Historia politica del Imperio almohade*, I, pp.382–88.
30. *Muᶜjib*, p.209.
31. *Bayān*, III, p.205.
32. Cf. *Fut.*, I, p.577; II, p.548; III, p.560; IV, p.121.

into the capital itself. His repeated calls for charity, his virtues, selflessness and generosity aroused admiration in some but exasperation in many others. According to one story the *fuqahā'*, or jurists, became so aggravated that they drew up a bill of indictment intending to submit it to Sultan Yaᶜqūb; but when Yaᶜqūb started reading the document the accusations had turned into eulogies . . .[33] Everyone who knew Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-Sabtī was unanimous on one point—his almost obsessive attachment to charity, *ṣadaqa*. Tādilī, who was an acquaintance of his over a long period of time, states that 'his teaching revolved around *ṣadaqa*'.[34] Averroes echoed the same verdict when he declared that for Abū l-ᶜAbbās 'Existence proceeds from generosity'.[35] It is hardly surprising therefore to find Ibn ᶜArabī refer to him as '*ṣāḥib al-ṣadaqāt*', the 'giver of alms'. He also provides some details about him which appear not to be mentioned in any of the writings of Sabtī's biographers: 'He told me himself that he had asked God to give him in advance in this lower world everything [that was reserved for him in the Future Life], and God did so. As a result he was able to cause illness and to heal, to make live and make die, to give power to certain men or withdraw it—all thanks to [the practice of] alms . . .. But he did inform me that he had put aside into His safekeeping [the merits corresponding to an almsgiving of] one quarter of a dirham for his Future Life . . .. I too did the same practice in my early stages and witnessed marvellous results; but in my case and in the case of others similar to me we obtained this from God without any wish for it on our part'.[36]

Ibn ᶜArabī also formed a friendship with another Sufi living in Marrakech: Muḥammad al-Marrākushī, a man who seems to have gone unnoticed by the hagiographers. This saint's initiatory motto (*ḥijjīr*) was the verse 'Endure patiently the decree of your Lord, for you are under Our eyes' (Qur'ān 52:48). From this verse he had derived a quite exceptional capacity to endure misfortunes with joy. As Ibn ᶜArabī writes about him: 'Never have I seen him despondent. He would greet calamities with joy and laughter . . .. He was also extremely strict in his respect for the times allocated for acts of worship; never have I met his equal in this station'.[37] Marrākushī for his own part had a profound affection for Ibn ᶜArabī, and never left him for a moment either day or night. When the inevitable time of separation arrived, sadness for once won the upper hand over cheerfulness. 'No brother was more desolated by my departure than he, at the time when I left him to come to this country [i.e. to the East].'

33. For Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-Sabtī's life cf. É. Dermenghem, *Vie des saints musulmans*, Paris 1983, pp.265–73; *Tashawwuf*, pp.451–77.
34. *Tashawwuf*, p.453.
35. Ibid., p.454.
36. *Fut.*, IV, p.121.
37. *Fut.*, IV, p.143.

From Marrakech to Mecca is still a very long way—especially so for Ibn ʿArabī, who insisted on doing in the Maghreb what he had already done in Andalusia by visiting and offering his greetings to all those who in one way or another had played a part in his spiritual life. From Marrakech he headed for Fez with the specific intention of finding a certain Muḥammad al-Ḥaṣṣār: God had instructed him in a vision he had in Marrakech that he was to take this man as his companion on his long journey towards the East. 'Know that God has erected pillars of lights as supports for the throne; I don't know how many there are, but I have seen them. Their light resembles the light from lightning. However, the throne casts a shadow in which an inexpressible tranquillity resides. This shadow is the shadow of the throne's concavity, and it veils the light of He who is seated upon it: the Merciful. I also saw the treasure which is underneath the throne: from it came the utterance "neither strength nor power save through God the Sublime, the Magnificent". This treasure is Adam, peace be upon him. Above I saw many other treasures which I recognised, and beautiful birds that were flying around everywhere. One of the birds that I saw was more beautiful than the others; it greeted me and informed me that I was to take it as a companion on my journey to the East. I was in Marrakech when all this was revealed to me. I asked: "Who is this companion?" The reply I was given was: "He is Muḥammad al-Ḥaṣṣār of Fez. He has asked God to be able to go to the East; take him with you!" I answered: "I hear and I obey." I then said to he who was the bird: "You will be my companion if God so wishes!"

'When I arrived in Fez I searched for this man and he came to see me. I said to him: "Have you asked for something from God?" He answered: "I asked of Him that He allow me to go to the East, and I was told, 'So-and-so will take you there'. Since then I have been waiting for you".

'I took him as my companion in 597 and brought him to Egypt, which is where he died.'[38]

In the company of Muḥammad al-Ḥaṣṣār, and probably of Ḥabashī as well, Ibn ʿArabī next made his way towards Ifrīqiya. He no doubt stopped off in Tlemcen, which is eight days' walk from Fez, to say goodbye to some of his friends there; we can at any rate be perfectly certain that around this time—in 597—he made a pilgrimage to the tomb of Abū Madyan at ʿUbbād, which is not far from Tlemcen.[39] Tireless pilgrim that he was, he then turned north again and continued along the coast as far as Bougie. It was here, in this town still impregnated with the presence of the great saint of the Maghreb, that the Shaikh al-Akbar saw himself united in marriage with all the stars in heaven

38. *Fut.*, II, p.436.
39. *Muḥāḍarat*, II, p.68.

and then with all the letters of the alphabet.[40] Intrigued, he asked a friend to submit the vision to an interpreter of dreams, but insisted that the friend avoid revealing his name. 'When my dream was submitted to this man, he was most impressed and declared: "This is the bottomless sea. Whoever had this dream will receive a portion of the celestial sciences, of the hidden sciences and of the mysteries of the stars and of the letters which nobody else has obtained in his time." He was silent for a moment, and then said: "If the person who had this dream is in this town, he can only be the young Andalusian who has just arrived," and he mentioned me by name. My companion was astounded and quite stunned. Then the man said: "Yes it can only be him! There's no point trying to conceal him from me!" "Yes, it is him," my companion replied. The man went on: "In this time, that can only be granted to him. Could you possibly take me to him so that I can offer him my greetings?" "I will do nothing without receiving his authorisation," was my companion's reply; he consulted me and I told him not to return to him. As for myself, I resumed my travels almost straight away.'[41] Ghubrīnī (*d.* 704/1304) recounts this incident in detail, apparently basing his report on information he had heard orally (*dhukira lī*); and he also asserts that at Bougie Ibn ʿArabī met someone called Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿArabī.[42] It is rather strange that in his sketch of this saint[43] Ghubrīnī essentially bases what he says on the authority—no doubt a written one—of Ibn ʿArabī; strange, because there appears to be no trace of any reference to a man of this name in Ibn ʿArabī's writings. Whatever the correct explanation of the anomaly, one clear implication of the passage cited by Ghubrīnī is that Ibn ʿArabī seems to have considered Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿArabī a *malāmī*, a follower of the path of blame, or at the very least as a saint who concealed his true spiritual state by pretending he was mentally retarded. 'He concealed what he was in reality and disguised it by assuming the appearance of a half-wit his whole life long. [Every year] he would leave Bougie in the month of Dhū l-ḥijja to perform the pilgrimage, and he would return without being noticed by anyone except those who are informed of the mysteries and secrets.'

From Bougie Ibn ʿArabī continued along the coast until he came to Tunis, the last break in his journey before his great departure. And it was quite a long break as well: according to his own statement it lasted nine months,[44] a period spent in the company of Shaikh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Mahdawī, Mahdawī's

40. Ibn ʿArabī, *Kitāb al-bā'*, Cairo 1954, pp.10–11; *Kitāb al-kutub*, p.49.
41. *Kitāb al-bā'*, pp.10–11.
42. *ʿUnwān al-dirāya*, pp.158–59.
43. Ibid., § 7, pp.80ff.
44. *Fut.*, I, pp.10, 98.

servant Ibn al-Murābiṭ[45] and his own companion Ḥabashī. Gathered together in one and the same place, these four men were to the universe what the four 'corners' are to the Kaᶜba:[46] 'We were the four pillars supporting the being of the universe and the [Perfect] Man. That was the state in which we parted, as the result of a change that had occurred because I had decided to perform the Greater and the Lesser Pilgrimage (*al-ḥajj wa l-ᶜumra*) *with the intention of subsequently returning to your* [i.e. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz al-Mahdawī's] *noble company*'.[47] Is Ibn ᶜArabī telling us here that at the time when he left the Islamic West in 598/1201 to visit the holy places he was unaware that he would never see his native country again? This literal interpretation of the text hardly seems convincing. The methodical way in which he took his leave of the people and places that had played a part in his youth, plus the certainty he so often expressed of a vocation which was to have a sphere of influence reaching well beyond the limits of the West, would appear to exclude the possibility that he viewed his departure as a mere temporary break with his past. He was very probably aware that at least in this terrestrial world he would never see again either Mahdawī[48] or anyone else whom he left behind in Andalusia. No doubt he derived this certainty as well as others from the vision he says he was granted by God in 589 at Algeciras, when he was allowed to contemplate his entire future. This same certainty will have been confirmed at Fez in 594, when he saw himself chosen to assume the supreme role of Seal of the Saints: a role with a universal dimension which implied that from the periphery of the Islamic world he was to make his way towards its centre and there establish himself. But friendship still has its rights. Whether an expression of regret, or the formulation of an empty wish, or a statement meant to console someone he knew he had left for ever, this incidental remark was powerless to hold in check a divine decree which had an imprescriptible authority that Ibn ᶜArabī knew better than anyone else.

45. For Ibn al-Murābiṭ cf. also *Rūḥ*, § 50, p.125, and p.163; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.141. He is referred to by Ibn Qunfudh in *Uns al-faqīr*, p.98.

46. For the correspondence between *awtād* and *arkān al-bayt* cf. *Fut.*, I, p.160; II, p.5.

47. *Fut.*, I, p.10; I, p.172 of O. Yahia's critical edition.

48. They could theoretically have met again because Mahdawī left for the East and spent some time there after 600 (cf. D. Gril's note, Ṣafī al-Dīn, *Risāla*, p.205). But there are no references in Ibn ᶜArabī's writings which would entitle us to suppose that they were reunited in the East.

8. The Great Pilgrimage

THE EAST UNDER THE AYYŪBIDS

THE Andalusia Ibn ᶜArabī left behind him was gradually losing ground to the Christian reconquest. In the East, where he was making for, other armies—again in the name of Christ—posed the same threat. The heroic deeds of the Crusaders, sung by the troubadours, transformed into image at Saint-Sulpice and Épinal, are one of the greatest *topoi* or recurring themes of the western imagination.[1] Richard the Lionheart, Saladin, the Templars and the Holy Sepulchre belong as much to mythology as to history. Let us look briefly at some of the facts.

On 22 Shaᶜbān 492 or 14 July 1099 the Crusaders 'liberated the Holy Sepulchre' in response to the call from Urban the Second. The Jewish and Muslim population were put to the sword, and the Roman Kingdom of Jerusalem was born. In spite of their vast numerical superiority it took the Muslims two centuries to expel all the Franks from Palestine. On the first day of Muḥarram 567, 10 September 1171, the *khuṭba* or sermon was delivered at Cairo in the name of the Abbasid caliph: Saladin had just abolished two and a half centuries of the Fatimid caliphate. On Friday 27 Rajab 583, 2 October 1187, Muslims tore down the cross which for a number of years had adorned the dome of Masjid al-Aqṣā: Saladin had reconquered Jerusalem.

In Europe emotions ran high. Preparations were made for the Third Crusade, under the direction of Frederick the First, Emperor of Germany, Philippe Auguste, King of France, and Richard the Lionheart, King of England. Of these three rulers only Richard would reach the end of his journey. After taking Cyprus he managed to win back Acre, Ascalon and Jaffa from Saladin. But both sides were wearied by war and, forced for a

1. For the history of the Crusades see the bibliography compiled by J. Sauvaget, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'Orient musulman, éléments de bibliographie*, completed by C. Cahen, Paris 1961, p.167.

number of reasons to return to their own countries, on 22 Shaʿbān 598 or 2 September 1192 the two enemies signed the peace treaty of Ramla which left to the Franks the entire coastline from Tyre to Jaffa. A few months later Saladin died at the age of fifty-five. Whether he was noble, generous, just and pious as Muslims have always believed and still believe, or whether he was ambitious, egoistic and a hypocrite as certain historians seem to want to prove, Saladin remains the conqueror of Hattin and the liberator of Jerusalem. Perhaps his one greatest achievement was to have united under his standard Egypt, Syria, the Jazīra and Palestine. However, the coalition was more apparent than real. The premature loss of the founder of the Ayyūbid dynasty led to loss of the unity of the Empire, which would be fought over continually and divided up among his successors. From this time onwards Ayyūbid history basically became the history of a never-ending fratricidal struggle, a struggle which most often took the form of war between Cairo and Damascus.[2] It was eventually ʿĀdil, Saladin's brother, who was to emerge triumphant from the dissensions that had divided the sons of Saladin for eight years: invited by both sides to play the role of arbitrator in the conflict, he ended up having himself proclaimed sultan at Cairo in 596/1200. He divided up the rest of the Empire between his own sons—except that he failed to take possession of Aleppo, which remained under the suzerainty of Ẓāhir, the fourth and youngest son of Saladin. The Franks, too, were victors. Saladin's wars had cost a fortune, and after his death the treasury was left bare. ʿĀdil intensified commercial relations with the Italian republics and at the same time inaugurated a policy of 'peaceful coexistence' with the crusaders. Admittedly, the crusaders probably no longer posed any real threat to the Islamic world, but they did occupy Cyprus, the principality of Antioch and the earldom of Tripoli, not to mention the greater part of the Syro-Palestinian coast. As we will see, this thinly disguised abnegation of the holy war, or *jihād*, which itself reached a climax in 626/1229 when Kāmil handed Jerusalem back to Frederick the Second, was to provoke considerable upheaval in public opinion—especially at Damascus.

Saladin's successors may, for what in fact were essentially economic reasons, have buried the hatchet in their battle with the infidel but this did not mean that as rulers they were any the less preoccupied with religion or any the less careful to favour orthodoxy. They tried hard to maintain cordial relations with the caliphate, in harmony with the course adopted by their predecessor who on the one hand brought Egypt back into the Sunni family

2. For the Ayyūbids see the invaluable article by C. Cahen, together with bibliography, in *EI*² s.v. One major work which has appeared in the meantime and should be added to the bibliography is Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, New York 1977.

and on the other hand appealed to the caliphate for a diploma of investiture confirming him in his territorial possessions while also offering proofs of his allegiance to Baghdad. After Sultan Afḍal had succeeded to his illustrious father in 589/1193, his first action was to dispatch a mission to Baghdad with the aim of obtaining a diploma of investiture from the caliph, al-Nāṣir. In 599/1202 Sultan ʿĀdil (596/1200–615/1218) became a member of the *futuwwa*: a kind of initiatory organisation which had been institutionalised and made official by Caliph al-Nāṣir with the help of the Sufi Suhrawardī (*d.* 632/1234). Suhrawardī's aim had been to bring aristocracy and princes together within the framework of one spiritual order and in the name of one common ideal, and by so doing curb the gradual disintegration of the caliphate while also protecting it against its enemies who were assailing it from every direction—from within as well as from without.[3]

In 604/1207 ʿĀdil dispatched a delegation to Baghdad with his own request to the caliph for a diploma of investiture legitimising his authority; the diploma was delivered to him in Damascus by Suhrawardī. Membership of the *futuwwa* on the part of the various Ayyūbids, along with the diplomas of investiture which they actively sought for, could *a priori* be interpreted as simply testifying to their purely formal respect for the institution of the caliphate. However, there are some other factors which seem to indicate that their respect was almost as real as it was apparent. Certainly the Ayyūbids did not give up reigning as independent sovereigns over the territories that were theirs, and neither was this something that the caliphate demanded of them; but it is remarkable all the same that on several occasions they took into consideration the caliph's advice when he intervened diplomatically to try to quell the family conflicts. This happened for example in 606/1209 in the dispute between ʿĀdil and his nephew Ẓāhir, and again in the clash between Kāmil and Nāṣir Dāwūd in 633/1236.

As far as the relationship between the Ayyūbid dynasty and Islam is concerned, it is impossible not to notice—among a number of other signs—the remarkable extent to which religious architecture flourished. The Seljuqs, followed by the Zangids, had set the example with their fondness for creating large numbers of *madrasas*. Saladin and then his successors simply intensified their predecessors' efforts; here and there throughout Syria, the Jazīra and Egypt new colleges and *khānqāhs* started to appear. In 602/1206 ʿĀdil gave instructions to his minister for the paving of the enormous courtyard in front of the Great Mosque of the Umayyads, and several years later he gave instructions for extending the Muṣallā. His son Kāmil, sultan of Egypt (615/

3. For the *futuwwa* cf. *EI*² s.v. For Caliph al-Nāṣir cf. Angela Hartmann, *An-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh*, Berlin–New York 1975.

1218–635/1238), was responsible for the building of Cairo's first *dār al-ḥadīth*; his other son, Muᶜaẓẓam, who was sultan of Damascus (615/1218–624/1227) and one of the few Ayyūbids to adopt the Ḥanafite form of ritual, had a major Ḥanafite *madrasa* built in his city and also restored the Maqṣūra al-Kindī of the Great Mosque. Their father ᶜĀdil, anxious no doubt to mollify the jurists who were to say the least disappointed by his policy of 'peaceful coexistence' with the Franks, redeemed himself in their eyes by taking a strong stand against contraband in wine and by abolishing illegal taxes (*mukūs*).[4] At any rate he made a particularly good impression on Ibn ᶜArabī, who met him at Mayyāfāriqīn. 'I have not met any other ruler who has realised this station [of familiarity], in council and in the presence of princes and ambassadors, to the degree achieved by King ᶜĀdil b. Abī Bakr b. Ayyūb with regard to his grandchildren at the time when I was his guest at Mayyāfāriqīn, as a member of the assembly. I have met many kings but I have seen none who conducted themselves in this sphere in the same way as King ᶜĀdil. I considered this to be one of his virtues; because of it I esteemed him all the higher and I thanked him for it. I noticed that he showed consideration and kindness towards his wives . . . which I have not perceived in any other king.'[5]

As for ᶜĀdil's son Muᶜaẓẓam, admittedly he was responsible for reintroducing the notorious illegal taxes; but he also enjoyed a considerable reputation among the *ᶜulamā'* for his expertise in matters of jurisprudence (he was the author of a polemical work against the historian Baghdādī), grammar and *adab*, and also for his concern to intensify the war effort of *jihād* against the occupying Christians.[6] And as we will see, his own son Nāṣir Dāwūd fiercely denounced Kāmil's surrender of Jerusalem.

While the rapid increase in *madrasa*s testifies to the keenness of the Ayyūbid princes to promote orthodox religious teaching, the foundation under their aegis of several *khānqāh*s similarly suggests a certain sympathy on their part for Sufism—perhaps reinforced by the unacknowledged desire to control them more effectively. There can be no disputing the fact that in the East during the twelfth century—and even more so during the thirteenth—there was close collaboration between temporal power and Sufi circles. In this respect one has only to think of the role played by Suhrawardī during the time that Nāṣir was caliph, or of the role of the Banū Ḥamawayh who held a virtual monopoly over the simultaneously political and religious post of

4. For ᶜĀdil's religious attitude cf. Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*, pp.146–49.

5. *Fut.*, IV, p.225.

6. For relations between Muᶜaẓẓam and the *ᶜulamā'* cf. Humphreys, op. cit., pp.188–92; L. Pouzet, *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, I, pp.310–12.

'Shaikh of Shaikhs' under the Ayyūbid sultans. As to the precise nature and extent of the influence exerted by Sufis over men of power, we are fortunate in possessing accounts by two contemporary writers, Ṣafī al-Dīn Ibn Abī Manṣūr and Ibn ᶜArabī; both of them confirm the existence of close contacts between the Ayyūbid princes and the Men of the Path. From Ibn Abī Manṣūr we learn that a 'bond of brotherhood' had been formed between King ᶜĀdil and Shaikh ᶜĀtīq. Shaikh ᶜĀtīq b. Aḥmad al-Lawrāqī was originally from Lorca in Andalusia; he had come to the East together with his master Abū l-Najā and had settled in Damascus, which is where he died in 616/1219 after reaching the age of a hundred. He lived in the house of the '*qāḍī* of *qāḍī*s', Zakī al-Dīn (*d.* 616/1219), who asked him to intercede on his behalf with Sultan ᶜĀdil. 'Al-Malik al-ᶜĀdil wanted to confiscate this *qāḍī*'s possessions, and Shaikh ᶜAtīq happened to be staying in the man's home at the time. Twenty thousand dinars were being demanded of him, and just after four thousand dinars had been extracted from him he went looking for the shaikh and asked him to intercede with the sultan on his behalf. "I will certainly intercede on your behalf with God", the shaikh assured him. "And would the master be willing to meet with al-Malik al-ᶜĀdil?", suggested the *qāḍī*. The shaikh agreed to the proposal and went to the sultan, who received him respectfully because a bond of brotherhood had already been established between them. The shaikh said to him: "Brother of mine, don't give my brother the *qāḍī* Zakī al-Dīn a hard time. Leave him in peace, and God's blessing be upon you!" The sultan phrased his response to the shaikh in conciliatory terms and offered his apologies; then they parted. The following night the sultan saw himself in a dream surrounded by the keepers of hell, who were saying to him: "Unless you leave the *qāḍī* alone now that the shaikh, that holy man of God, has intervened on his behalf, we will see to it that you perish!" Al-ᶜĀdil woke in terror and gave instructions that the *qāḍī* was not to be disturbed any more, and that the amount of money which had already been extracted from him should be returned. The shaikh commented to the *qāḍī*: "Didn't I tell you that it would have been quite enough for me to speak on your behalf to my Sultan? You could have spared me the trouble of having to go and speak to yours!" '[7]

Also in the *Risāla* we find the following rather strange story, which shows King Kāmil—the same king who ceded the Holy City to Frederick the Second—in a somewhat unexpected light. 'At Fusṭāṭ', writes Ṣafī al-Dīn, 'I made the acquaintance of the venerable shaikh Abū ᶜAbd Allāh al-Qurṭubī, who was one of the most intimate disciples of Shaikh al-Qurashī. He possessed a

7. Ṣafī al-Dīn, *Risāla*, trans. D. Gril, pp.122–23. For Shaikh ᶜAtīq cf. the bibliographical note, ibid., p.227.

spirituality of a very high level and was greatly respected by teachers, by the learned, and by princes alike. He formed a bond of friendship with al-Malik al-ʿĀdil and was revered by al-Malik al-Kāmil, who went to visit him on foot. He stayed most of the time at Medina. There was a close link between him and the Prophet: they exchanged questions, answers and greetings. The Messenger of God even gave him a message to deliver to al-Malik al-Kāmil, and the shaikh passed it on to him in Egypt. On his arrival he stopped off at Rasad, where the sultan came to meet him, humble and full of respect. He took delivery of the contents of the message, which he carried out in every detail.'[8]

What with ʿĀdil submitting docilely to Shaikh ʿAtīq's decision, and Kāmil visiting Shaikh Qurṭubī on foot, everything would seem to suggest that the Ayyūbid rulers—or at the very least some of them—were under the direct or indirect influence of spiritual masters. Apart from there being no *a priori* reasons to doubt the accuracy of Ṣafī al-Dīn's testimony (his own father was in the service of kings ʿĀdil, ʿAzīz and Ashraf, and was also a disciple of Shaikh Qurashī), on this particular point the details of his account are corroborated by what we know of the relationship between Ibn ʿArabī and certain Ayyūbid sovereigns. Indeed, for reasons we will examine in due course, in the East Ibn ʿArabī adopted a quite different attitude towards both Ayyūbid and Seljuq princes from his attitude in the West: although he did not systematically seek out their company, neither did he refuse it. Here in the East, just as in the West, rulers requested his presence, asked him for advice and sought his approval. Even more surprisingly, the king of Aleppo, Ẓāhir, examined and judged one hundred and eighteen requests in the space of one single day at his request. 'I had some influence over the king and sultan of Aleppo, Ẓāhir b. al-Malik Nāṣir . . . b. Ayyūb. One day I submitted one hundred and eighteen matters to him in a single audience, and he passed judgement on them all. In connection with one of these cases I interceded on behalf of a man who was one of his intimates, who had divulged a state secret and had attempted to undermine his sovereignty. [Ẓāhir] had decided to have him executed. His lieutenant in the fortress, Badr al-Dīn Īdāmūr, had advised him to keep his decision a secret so that I would not know anything about it, but even so I came to hear of it. When I broached the subject with him, he lowered his head and said: "First of all, may the master (*mawlā*) be informed of this man's sin. It is one of those crimes that kings are unable to pardon". I replied: "And you imagine you possess the dignity of kings and think you are a sultan! By God, in the whole universe there is not one sin I would be unable to pardon. And yet I am only one of your subjects! How then are you incapable of pardoning a

8. *Risāla*, p.127, with the biobibliographical note on Qurṭubī, ibid. p.212.

man for a sin which is not a transgression of the Divine Law? Your magnanimity is pretty mediocre!" He was ashamed, had the man released and pardoned him . . .. After this meeting he was quick to fulfil every request I submitted to him.'[9]

From Maqqarī (*d.* 1041/1631), author of the *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, we also learn that the prince of Homs used to give Ibn ʿArabī a hundred dirhams per day.[10] And finally, there is the question of what we are to make of the certificate (*ijāza*) which Ibn ʿArabī awarded to al-Ashraf, the king of Damascus, in 632. Should we see in all this nothing but political manœuvring on the part of the Ayyūbid rulers, aimed at winning over the Sufi circles that were coming to play an increasingly influential role in society? As a theory this would seem hardly acceptable: even allowing for the number of disciples Ibn ʿArabī brought together into one group, it is difficult to see what the political advantage for the first Ayyūbids would have been in winning his favour. Just like his two Andalusian co-religionists, ʿAtīq and Qurṭubī, Ibn ʿArabī was merely a foreigner who was generously received and tolerated in the East.

Otherwise, the relations between Ayyūbid princes and expatriate Sufis were not always idyllic. Suhrawardī, the Shaikh al-Ishrāq, was executed at Aleppo in 587/1191 on Saladin's orders.[11] Similarly, Ṣafī al-Dīn himself reports a dispute which broke out between Ḥasan Ṭawīl, a shaikh from the Maghreb, and al-Malik al-Kāmil when the sultan decided to yield to the Christians' request that he forbid the shaikh from restoring a mosque which had been converted into a church. With the support of the populace, Shaikh Ḥasan won the case. 'It was summer, and at this time of year sandbanks blocked the flow of the river between the island and Fusṭāṭ. The sultan [i.e. Kāmil] was walking on this bank when, egged on by the shaikh, the crowd massed in front of him chanting "The mosque, the mosque!" The sultan was afraid of being stoned and barricaded himself inside the customs warehouse. He was obliged to dispatch the Great Master (*shaykh al-shuyūkh*) Ṣadr al-Dīn along with his vizier al-Ṣāḥib al-Aʿazz b. Shukr to find out the facts about the church and the mosque. These two men went to the actual spot; people poured into the streets and onto the rooftops and terraces, ready to start hurling bricks. The shaikh and the vizier had to force their way through the crowd to arrive at the church, and then they entered it. The Great Master had no choice but to roll out his rug, pronounce the *takbīr* formula and perform the prayer which is usually performed on entering a mosque.'[12] Ṣafī al-Dīn

9. *Fut.*, IV, p.539. The same story is also told in III, p.406 and, more allusively, in III, p.472.

10. *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, II, p.166. The prince in question is almost certainly Mujāhid Shīrkūh, who was ruler of Homs from 582 until his death in 637/1239.

11. For this Iranian mystic cf. Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, Paris 1972, vol.2.

12. *Risāla*, pp.126–27.

goes on to describe how Kāmil was angry at being forced to reverse his decision and took his revenge on the shaikh by expelling him from Egypt. But, frightened by a dream in which he saw himself threatened by the keepers of hell, he asked his vizier to have him recalled.

Several points emerge from a reading of this account. Firstly, it is worth noting that the shaikh from the Maghreb enjoyed such popularity that he was able to frustrate the sultan's scheme. Secondly, and this is the most important point, the report testifies to a certain antagonism between Muslims and Christians, as well as to the favour the Christians seem to have enjoyed in the case of Kāmil. As a general rule, Ayyūbid rulers showed themselves rather tolerant towards the Christian and Jewish religious minorities.[13] But it is equally true that they were not always followed in their attitude by the mass of their subjects. Christians, and Copts in particular, were suspected of collaboration with the Frankish enemy and at times became victims of popular vindictiveness. It is clearly no accident that these waves of anti-Christian riots coincided with the most critical periods of 'peaceful coexistence'. This was the case in 615, when Damietta was surrounded by the Franks, in 640/1242 when the Templars attacked Bethlehem, and in 648/1250 after Louis the Ninth's capitulation—when, according to the chronicler Abū Shāma, the Christians demonstrated quite ostentatiously their disappointment in face of the Muslim victory.[14] But, as E. Sivan has pointed out, these 'three cases of riots won no support from the sultans, and in 1242 al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb even took severe measures against the agitators'.[15] Finally, it is interesting to observe the role played during the course of the dispute by the shaikh of shaikhs Ṣadr al-Dīn b. Ḥamawayh, who had been entrusted by Kāmil with the task of appeasing the population. Those who occupied this position of 'shaikh of shaikhs' were closer to the seat of political power than the Sufis whom they were initially supposed to represent, and they were often used as ambassadors by oriental rulers. It is rather remarkable that in the thirteenth century this responsibility always reverted to Iranians: to Suhrawardī in Baghdad, who on a number of occasions was sent on diplomatic missions by the caliph, and to the Banū Ḥamawayh in Syria.[16]

13. See further E. Sivan, 'Notes sur la situation des chrétiens à l'époque ayyûbide', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 172.2, October–December 1967, pp.117–30; C. Cahen, 'L'Islam et les minorités confessionnelles', *La Table Ronde*, 126, June 1958, pp.67–9.

14. *Tarājim*, p.184.

15. E. Sivan, *L'Islam et la croisade*, Paris 1968, p.181. Regarding the three riots cf. also Sivan's 'Notes sur la situation des chrétiens', pp.125–29. In 1242 al-Malik al-Sāliḥ was confronted with the same problem Kāmil had to face in the incident described above, when the *qāḍī* ʿIzz al-Dīn tried to have a church converted into a mosque.

16. Cf. L. Pouzet, *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, I, pp.252–53, 285.

The first member of this illustrious Persian family to receive the title was ʿImād al-Dīn ʿUmar (*d.* 577/1181), who was appointed to the post by Nūr al-Dīn; on his death he was succeeded by his son Ṣādr al-Dīn—first at Damascus and then in Egypt, where Sultan ʿĀdil appointed him director of the Saʿīd al-Suʿadā' *khānqāh*. He also performed the role of ambassador on various occasions, and it was during the course of one of his diplomatic missions (entrusted to him by Kāmil) that he died at Mosul in approximately 616–7.[17] His four sons, known by the title of *awlād al-shaykh*,[18] all occupied influential positions in the government and army. It is worth bearing in mind that one of them, Fakhr al-Dīn Yūsuf, was Kāmil's ambassador to Frederick the Second during the negotiations which ended in the surrender of Jerusalem; in 648/1250 he was also put in charge of the defence of Egypt against the Frankish invasion.

In addition to this strong injection of Iranian blood into Ayyūbid society, we must also reckon with a major contribution in the form of immigrants from the Islamic West. In fact this particular period witnessed an upsurge in movement from Andalusia and the Maghreb towards the East. Of course the pilgrimage to Mecca had at all times drawn a number of people from these areas to the shores of the Red Sea; but to this traditional factor a new impulse was now added in the form of the Reconquista, which as it proceeded encouraged Andalusians to emigrate. Those who decided not to return to their native country (and in this case more and more people decided against doing so) settled for the most part in Egypt, and especially in Alexandria where everything possible was done to facilitate their reception and accommodation. As Ibn Jubayr (*d.* 614/1217) was to write when he visited Alexandria during the reign of Saladin: 'One of the merits and advantages of this city—the credit for which is really due to the sultan—is the schools and convents that have been founded for the sake of people given to study and piety who have arrived here from the most distant countries. Each of them is given lodgings where he can live, a teacher to instruct him in the branch of science that he wishes to learn, and a pension to satisfy all his needs . . .'.[19] Encouraged and protected by the Ayyūbid government, a fair number of these immigrants went on to distinguish themselves in the traditional disciplines. This was the case for example with the Ẓāhirite Ibn Diḥya (*d.* 634/1237): originally from Valencia, Sultan ʿĀdil appointed him private tutor to his son Kāmil, who later on was to nominate him rector of the *dār al-ḥadīth*

17. For Ṣadr al-Dīn b. Ḥamawayh cf. *EI*² s.v. Awlād al-shaykh.

18. Ibid.

19. Cf. the translation of Ibn Jubayr by Gaudeffroy Demombynes, Paris 1949, *Voyages*, I, p.42; for the same arrangements in Cairo, ibid., p.56.

that he founded in Cairo.[20] It was the same with the grammarian Ibn Muᶜṭī, who died in Cairo in 628/1231,[21] and with his most famous disciple Ibn Mālik (*d.* 672/1274), author of the renowned *Alfiyya*.[22] But their presence is most perceptible in Sufi circles.[23] The *Risāla* provides an especially instructive example because out of the hundred and fifty-five shaikhs referred to by Ṣafī al-Dīn thirty-three were from the Maghreb and twenty-seven from Andalusia; most of them had settled in Egypt. Regardless of whether they were disciples of Abū Madyan, Abū Yaᶜzā or Ibn Saydabūn (just to mention these three teachers), they contributed substantially to the rapid expansion of Sufism in the East, and in particular to its progressive structuring into the hierarchical organisations that would soon come to be known as *ṭuruq*. There should be no need to cite the role played by Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (*d.* 656/1258), who took refuge in Egypt after suffering persecution in Tunis; or the role of Ibn Sabᶜīn, who died at Mecca in 660, or of Ibn Sabīn's famous disciple Shushtarī, who died the same year at Damietta. Whereas most of these migrants opted to remain in Egypt, where they had arrived by following the route of the pilgrimage, a minority of them chose Syria as their country of asylum.[24] Included in this category was of course Ibn ᶜArabī himself, who settled in Syria in 620H, plus a fair number of his disciples such as ᶜAfīf al-Dīn Tilimsānī, who was also related as son-in-law to Ibn Sabᶜīn.[25] One also notes among those present in Syria at readings from the Master's works two members of the eminent Birzālī family (Berbers who came originally from Seville) as well as a number of individuals bearing the *nisba* 'al-Qurṭubī'.[26] It was also to Syria that Abū l-Ḥasan al-Harrālī, a little-known Moroccan Sufi, came to end his days.[27] Originally from Marrakech, al-Harrālī left the Maghreb for the Mashreq towards the end of his life for reasons which are still unclear. After a brief stay in Egypt he left for Syria; his commentary on the Qur'ān seems to have displeased ᶜIzz al-Dīn b. ᶜAbd al-Salām al-Sulamī, who had him expelled from Damascus in 632H. He eventually settled in Hama, and died in the same year as Ibn ᶜArabī. Syria also became the country of exile

20. For Ibn Diḥya cf. *EI*² s.v.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. For discussion of this issue see D. Gril's introduction to the *Risāla*, pp.18–29.
24. For Syrian immigrants from Andalusia and the Maghreb during the thirteenth century see Pouzet, 'Maghrébins à Damas au VII^e/XIII^e siècle', *B.E.O.* XXVIII, 1975.
25. A later chapter will contain a more detailed discussion of Ibn ᶜArabī's disciples.
26. See the *samāᶜ*s for the *Futūḥāt* in *Histoire et classification*, R.G. § 135.
27. He is the subject of a lengthy sketch by Ghubrīnī in the *ᶜUnwān al-dirāya*, Algiers edition, 1970, § 33, pp.145–157, which is partially translated into French by É. Dermenghem in *Vie des saints musulmans*, pp.275–88. For al-Harrālī see also Pouzet, *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, I, p.258.

for Prince Abū l-Ḥasan Ibn Hūd, a Sabᶜīnian who had the strange custom of inviting Christians and Jews to participate in his teaching.[28]

Shaikh Harrālī, who fell a victim to the intransigence of the jurist ᶜIzz al-Dīn, is a good example of the tensions and misunderstandings which sometimes arose between western Sufis and oriental *fuqahā'*. While on this subject we need to look at the famous report by Ghubrīnī (*d.* 704/1304) that Ibn ᶜArabī was condemned to death in Egypt. 'The people of Egypt reproached him for certain things he had said and tried to have him executed just as had happened to Ḥallāj and others as well. It was Shaikh Abū l-Ḥasan ᶜAlī b. Abī Naṣr Fatḥ b. ᶜAbd Allāh al-Bijā'ī who interceded on his behalf and saved him.'[29] This picture of Ibn ᶜArabī allowing himself to get carried away and making ecstatic utterances (*shaṭaḥāt*)—the continuation of the passage clearly shows that that is what was involved[30]—and then being condemned to death by the jurists just like the man who three centuries earlier had cried '*anā l-ḥaqq*', 'I am the Truth', is for a number of reasons hardly credible. To begin with, it is important to note that Ghubrīnī—the first chronicler to report the incident—fails to cite either sources or transmitters for it.[31] One also notes that in certain details the information he gives is inaccurate and betrays a considerable amount of carelessness. For example, he gives 640 as the year of Ibn ᶜArabī's death instead of 638. The mistake is all the more aberrant because every other compiler with the exception of Ibn al-Abbār[32] is unanimous in dating his death to the year 638, even though there is sometimes some disagreement about the exact month. He also states twice[33] that Ibn ᶜArabī was known by the name of Ibn Surāqa: a claim which is, to say the least, surprising considering that it does not appear to have been made by any other author. Possibly we are to detect here the signs of a confusion between Ibn ᶜArabī and the *faqīh-ṣūfī* Ibn Surāqa (*d.* 662/1264), a contemporary of his who had the same *laqab* (Muḥyī l-Dīn) as he did and also the same *kunya* (Abū Bakr). Originally from Jativa, Ibn Surāqa emigrated to the East; first he lived in Syria, where he was rector of the al-Bahā'iyya *dār al-ḥadīth* at Aleppo, and later in Egypt where he became rector of the *dār al-*

28. For Ibn Hūd cf. Massignon, *Passion*, II, p.324; *EI*² s.v.; *Shadharāt*, V, pp.446–47.
29. *ᶜUnwān al-dirāya*, p.159.
30. Ghubrīnī goes on to say that Ibn ᶜArabī supposedly told Shaikh Bijā'ī that the statements he had uttered were *shaṭaḥāt* he had spoken in a state of intoxication.
31. Those later writers who mention the incident simply follow the text of Ghubrīnī, which to this day remains the only source for it.
32. Cf. *Tak.*, ed. Codera, § 1023, where Ibn al-Abbār also gives the date as 640, which suggests that on this particular point Ghubrīnī probably followed the *Takmila*.
33. *ᶜUnwān*, pp.56, 158.

ḥadīth at Cairo between 656 and 660H.[34] We also happen to know that Ibn Surāqa was linked with Ibn ᶜArabī by some later writers, especially in connection with a story which describes how one day Ibn ᶜArabī declared to Ibn Surāqa as they were both leaving Damascus by the Bāb al-Farādīs: 'After so many thousands of years there will be [one] Ibn ᶜArabī and [one] Ibn Surāqa leaving by the same gate and in the same form'.[35] We are also told by Sakhāwī (*d.* 902/1497) that Ibn Surāqa—who we happen to know had affiliations with Sufism via Suhrawardī—was a companion of the Shaikh al-Akbar.[36] What is more, even though there would seem not to be any references to Ibn Surāqa in Ibn ᶜArabī's writings, two *samāᶜ*s for the *Futūḥāt* do attest to the fact that he read some chapters from this work at Aleppo in 639 under the supervision of Ismāᶜīl b. Sawdakīn.[37] These points considered, Ghubrīnī's mistake about the date of Ibn ᶜArabī's death and the confusion with Ibn Surāqa would not in themselves justify rejecting his testimony—were it not that these errors are yet further compounded by other implausibilities. Firstly there is Ibn ᶜArabī's own silence about the matter. If such a dramatic incident had really occurred it would be difficult to imagine him—a writer so quick to denounce the fanaticism of the *fuqahā'*—failing to mention it. But so far not the slightest allusion to any such episode has been discovered either in his own writings or in the writings of his disciples. Similarly, Ibn ᶜArabī seems never to have mentioned his supposed 'saviour', Shaikh ᶜAlī b. Naṣr al-Bijā'ī,[38] although this is not to exclude the possibility that the two men actually met: in fact Ibn al-Abbār (*d.* 657/1259) states that Shaikh ᶜAlī b. Naṣr al-Bijā'ī transmitted Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* to Ibn ᶜArabī in Shawwāl 606.[39] There is also another point to be made, which is that in view of the severity of Ibn ᶜArabī's criticisms of saints who utter inspired statements (*shaṭaḥāt*) when in the grip of ecstasy[40] it is hard to believe he himself could have done the same and—what is more—boast about them to Shaikh Bijā'ī: for according to Ghubrīnī he is supposed to have said by way of justifying his behaviour, 'Those were ecstatic utterances [which I] spoke

34. For Ibn Surāqa cf. *Tarājim*, p.230; *Wāfī*, I, pp.208–9; *Shadharāt*, V, p.310; Massignon, *Passion*, II, p.311.

35. Cf. e.g. *Wāfī*, IV, p.175; Sakhāwī, *al-Qawl al-munbī*, ms. Berlin 2849, spr 790/1–250, ff^{os} 32, 39. Bāb al-Farādīs was one of Damascus' main gates, situated to the north of the city.

36. *Al-Qawl al-munbī*, f° 92.

37. *Histoire et classification*, R.G. § 135, *samāᶜ* §§ 63 and 64.

38. For Shaikh ᶜAlī b. Naṣr al-Bijā'ī see the sketch in the *ᶜUnwān*, pp.142–4; *Nayl*, p.202; *Tak.*, § 1923.

39. *Tak.*, sketch of Ibn ᶜArabī § 1023.

40. Cf. e.g. *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, § 16, where he declares that a *shaṭḥ* is 'an utterance that betrays a certain foolishness and pretentiousness, which are qualities that are almost never manifested by men of spiritual realisation'.

while under the sway of intoxication, and he who is intoxicated cannot be blamed'.

All these factors lead one to doubt the authenticity of the anecdote, at least in the form in which it is reported in the *ᶜUnwān*. This is not to say that during his stay in Cairo Ibn ᶜArabī did not come into collision with some of the city's more intransigent jurists. However, we are perhaps better off positing a connection between this particular anecdote and a legend we will look at more closely in due course: the legend which has it that Ibn ᶜArabī was put to death in Syria for declaring 'Your Lord is beneath my feet'.

VOYAGE TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

We know the starting point for Ibn ᶜArabī's journey to the East: Tunis. We also know his point of arrival: Cairo. But as to his itinerary and the stages in his journey from the one place to the other, there is no precise information currently available. Although he refers so often to his encounters during the course of his many wanderings, he does not appear to have recorded one single incident or detail that could help shed light on the route he took; nor does he even tell us whether he made the journey by land or by sea. In a passage in the *Futūḥāt* Ibn ᶜArabī concludes that wherever possible travel by land is preferable to travel by sea, taking as his authority the sequence in which earth (*al-barr*) and sea (*al-baḥr*) are mentioned in the Qur'ān;[41] from this one may well deduce that he applied the rule to himself, and yet his silence about the matter tends to suggest that in this particular instance he did not make the journey by land. It is hard to imagine no trace at all surviving in his writings of his passage through the towns that lay along the route normally followed by the *ḥajj* caravans. This is also the route taken by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa little over a century later and described by him at the start of his narrative:[42] Sousse, Sfax, Gabès, Tripoli, Misratah. The most plausible hypothesis must be that the journey was comparatively short, and was made in one of those boats which at the time plied along the Mediterranean coast between Ifrīqiya and Alexandria.[43] We would perhaps be a little better off if we had the text of the *Kitāb al-riḥla*[44] which is mentioned in the *Ijāza* (§ 77) and the *Fihris* (§ 72); according to the *Fihris* it contained Ibn ᶜArabī's

41. *Fut.*, I, p.562, citing Qur'ān 10:22.

42. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Voyages*, trans. Defremery and Sanguinetti, pp.23–7.

43. Ibn ᶜArabī refers briefly to his transit through Alexandria in *Fut.*, II, p.425.

44. O. Yahia, *Histoire et classification*, R.G. § 603.

description of his itinerary. But to date no manuscripts of the work have yet been identified.

The Egypt Ibn ʿArabī discovered on his arrival at Fusṭāṭ—what was Cairo in 598/1201–2—was a country ravaged and decimated by one of the greatest famines it had ever known. According to the chroniclers, three quarters of the population of Egypt had succumbed to the plague and famine which had swept the land in 597–98;[45] the figures are doubtless exaggerated, but even so they give a good idea of the extent of the catastrophe. The Syrian chronicler Abū Shāma (*d.* 660/1261) describes how the Egyptians emigrated *en masse* to the Maghreb, to Syria, to the Hijāz and the Yemen to escape the disaster; and he adds that those who were unable to leave resorted to cannibalism. 'In those times it became normal to invite one's best friend to dinner at one's home and then cut his throat. People did the same with doctors: they called for them pretending that they wanted them to examine someone who was sick, then they killed them and ate them.'[46] Alongside this dramatic testimony we need to set Ibn ʿArabī's own account of the reaction evoked in his friend Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad al-Ḥarīrī (or al-Ḥarrār) by the sight of the corpses littering the ground. 'One day as he was walking along he saw some babies that were dying of hunger and he cried out: "Oh Lord, what does this mean?" The reply came: "Oh My servant, have I ever abandoned you?" "Certainly not." "Well then, don't protest! The infants you see are the fruit of adultery; and as for the adults, they have transgressed My laws. As a consequence I have inflicted My sanctions upon them. So don't be concerned!" These words appeased him, and from then on he accepted how things were for people.[47]

Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Ḥarīrī (*d.* 616/1219)[48] had a brother, Muḥammad al-Khayyāṭ, who was the same person from whom Ibn ʿArabī had learned the Qur'ān as a child and whom he had promised himself he would one day come to resemble. These two brothers, whose home in Seville had been next door to the home of Ibn ʿArabī's family, had left Andalusia in 590/1194 to perform the pilgrimage. Subsequently they had settled in Cairo, where Abū l-ʿAbbās for a while kept the company of Shaikh al-Qurashī (*d.* 599/1203); he himself became the teacher of Ṣafī al-Dīn Ibn Abī Manṣūr, to whom we

45. Abū Shāma, *Tarājim*, year 597, pp.19–20; Ibn ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab*, year 597, IV, p.328.

46. *Tarājim*, p.19.

47. *Rūḥ*, p.95; *Sufis of Andalusia*, §§ 9–10, p.94.

48. For Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Ḥarīrī cf. Ṣafī al-Dīn Abū Manṣūr, *Risāla*, pp.83–110 and the biobibliographical sketch on p.209; Massignon, *Opera minora*, III, p.260; Ibn ʿArabī, *Fut.*, I, pp.276, 410; II, p.529; *Muḥāḍarat*, II, p.31; O.Yahia, R.G. § 639, *samāʿ* § 9, and R.G. § 67, *samāʿ* § 1.

are indebted for the invaluable *Risāla* already referred to several times. To read Ibn ʿArabī's sketch of the two brothers in the *Rūḥ* is to gain the impression—perhaps quite mistaken—that he had a preference for Muḥammad al-Khayyāṭ. 'He returned to the Path long after his brother. He had a mother to whom he proved himself a pious son; he served her until she died. The fear [of God] dominated him to such an extent that one could hear his heart beating when he prayed . . .. He suffered wrong without retaliating, his visions were veridical, his conversations with God were frequent. Staying awake at night, fasting during the day, he was never to be seen idle . . .. He himself served the poor, providing them with food and clothing. He was a man full of leniency, benevolence, compassion and kindness . . .. That is how he was when I left him [in Andalusia], when I met up with him again [in Egypt], and when I left him there'.[49] Admittedly, Ibn ʿArabī was also generous in his praise of Shaikh al-Ḥarīrī: 'He was a man full of virtues and exempt from vices . . .. Fervent in self-mortification (*mujāhada*), always ready to come to the aid of his fellow man, sociable, tolerant, he approved whatever is pleasing to God but opposed everything that displeased Him . . .. He gave himself entirely to serving his brother and nobody else, and it is thanks to his brother's *baraka* that he is what he is'.[50] However, two other texts—one by Ibn ʿArabī, the other by Ṣafī al-Dīn, the disciple of Shaikh al-Ḥarīrī—reveal that a kind of tension, or rather lack of comprehension, seems to have produced a rift between the two teachers from Andalusia. The Ibn ʿArabī text occurs in chapter 52 of the *Futūḥāt*—a chapter devoted to 'those who are fearful of losing their essence when in the grip of revelation and return precipitately to the World of Manifestation (*ʿālam al-shahāda*)'. In it the Shaikh al-Akbar explains that only he who greets the spiritual instant (*wārid*) in the full state of an *ʿabd* or servant is capable of mastering it; on the other hand, a person in whom even the smallest particle of sovereignty, or *rubūbiyya*, remains hastens to return to the sense-world out of fear of losing his *rubūbiyya*. This, he asserts, was the case with Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Ḥarīrī. 'When he was snatched out of himself he would return to himself rapidly, disturbed and trembling. Whenever I took him to task and reproached him about it, he would reply that he was scared and feared losing his being in the vision of Him. If only the poor chap knew that when he separated himself from matter his soul returned to its original home—that is, to its very own being!'[51] Quite clearly Ḥarīrī's state was far from perfect in Ibn ʿArabī's eyes; and it will be remembered that for Ibn ʿArabī the complete and full realisation

49. *Rūḥ*, p.93; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.92–3.

50. *Rūḥ*, p.94; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.93.

51. *Fut.*, II, p.276.

of servitude (*ʿubūdiyya*) was the acme of sainthood. From the other point of view, Ḥarīrī himself seems to have had some reservations about Ibn ʿArabī. This at any rate seems to be how we must interpret the reticence alluded to in a series of letters preserved by Ṣafī al-Dīn. 'Shaikh Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī sent him [al-Ḥarīrī] the following letter from Damascus: "Dear brother, tell me about your various spiritual openings". The shaikh [al-Ḥarīrī] dictated to me the following reply: "Things have happened, but although the vision is clear the expression is unutterable". Ibn ʿArabī wrote back to him again: "Oh peerless one, transmit them to me through your inner being and I will reply to you, and to what you transmit to me, through my inner being". To the shaikh this demand seemed excessive, and he subsequently dictated to me the following response: "I saw the circle of the saints, and two of them were standing in the middle of them—Shaikh Abū l-Ḥasan Ibn al-Ṣabbāgh and an Andalusian. I was told that one of these two was the Supreme Pole. I was perplexed, asking myself which of the two he could be. Suddenly a sign manifested to them and they fell prostrate. I was then told that the first of the two to raise his head was the Pole. The Andalusian raised his head. I realised who he was, presented myself to him and—without uttering letters or sounds—posed him a question which he answered simply with a breath. I then advanced towards the saints who were forming the circle, and each of them gave me a science according to his capacity. If you are up to it, dear brother, I will reply to you from Egypt".'[52]

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While Miṣr-Fusṭāṭ was the first city founded by the Muslims after their arrival in Egypt in 20/641, the city of Cairo is much more recent in construction and was only built in 358/969 by order of the Fatimid caliph al-Muʿizz. It was Saladin who—as sultan facing the impending Frankish threat—gave instructions for a long wall to be built surrounding Fusṭāṭ-Miṣr-Cairo, which as a result were united into one and the same city.[53] In addition to the many *madrasa*s and a huge hospital—a veritable palace according to Ibn Jubayr[54]—the city of Cairo was also indebted to Saladin for the famous Saʿīd al-Suʿadā' *khānqāh*,[55] which welcomed visitors from abroad including Ibn ʿArabī himself, who stayed there for a while after his arrival in the capital.[56] This initial contact with the Orient turned out rather badly: a shaikh from

52. Ṣafī al-Dīn, *Risāla*, pp.107–8.

53. Cf. *EI*² s.v. Fusṭāṭ and Kāhira; Ibn Jubayr, *Voyages*, I, p.55, who specifies that the work on the construction of the wall was carried out by Christian prisoners.

54. Ibid.

55. Cf. *EI*² s.v. *khānqāh*.

56. *Rūḥ*, introduction, pp.26–7.

Irbil got it into his head to demonstrate to him that in the Islamic West there were no Sufis worthy of the name. Ibn ʿArabī's reply to the accusation came two years later in the form of the *Rūḥ al-quds*, which he wrote at Mecca. Fortunately he soon found his two friends Aḥmad al-Ḥarīrī and Muḥammad al-Khayyāṭ, Ḥarīrī's brother, and spent the month of Ramaḍān 598/1202 in their company.[57] They devised the scheme of setting off together for Mecca, but Muḥammad became seriously ill—no doubt a victim of the plague—and his brother was unable to persuade himself to abandon him.[58] So Ibn ʿArabī seems to have left Egypt accompanied only by Ḥabashī: his other companion—Muḥammad al-Ḥaṣṣār, whom he had brought with him from Fez—also died in Egypt.[59]

To one's great surprise, after leaving his two friends behind in Cairo in Shawwāl 598, Ibn ʿArabī headed not for the Ḥijāz but first of all for Palestine. Twice in his letters to Shaikh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Mahdawī he is explicit about this,[60] specifying that he went first to Hebron, to the tomb of Abraham, and then on to Jerusalem, where he prayed in the al-Aqṣā Mosque. Then he continued on his route to Medina, where he saluted the Prophet, and finally arrived in Mecca. To get from Cairo to Jerusalem he will no doubt have followed the classical itinerary adopted a little over a century later by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa: Bilbays, Ṣāliḥiyya, Qātya, al-ʿArīsh, Gaza, Hebron.[61] As for his journey from Jerusalem to Mecca, there can be no knowing for sure whether or not he covered the distance by foot; but that he did so is suggested by a passage in the *Rūḥ* where he uses the word *mashā* in referring to the trip.[62] Whatever the case, at some stage, probably at Jerusalem, he will have had to join up with the *ḥajj* caravan (it was now full season) if he was to reach Mecca by the end of Dhū l-qaʿda or the beginning of Dhū l-ḥijja and be in time to perform the pilgrimage rites.

Why did Ibn ʿArabī go via Palestine rather than make his way directly from Cairo to Mecca? Why did he not follow the example of other pilgrims leaving Cairo, and go up the Nile as far as Qūs, make his way over to ʿAydhab and from there cross the Red Sea to Jedda?[63] There are two possible explanations for his detour. Purely practical considerations—unsafe routes, looting and so forth—may have been involved, as in the case of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa who would later

57. *Rūḥ*, p.93.

58. Ibid., and Ṣafī al-Dīn, *Risāla*, pp.91–2.

59. *Fut.*, II, p.436.

60. *Rūḥ*, p.95; *Fut.*, I, p.10.

61. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Voyages*, pp.111–14.

62. *Rūḥ*, p.93.

63. For the route cf. Ibn Jubayr, *Voyages*, I, pp.63–85.

be forced to backtrack at ʿAydhab;[64] or the reasons could have been spiritual. In other words Ibn ʿArabī either chose deliberately to go to Palestine, Hebron and Jerusalem before continuing on his way to the sacred territory, or he was forced to do so by external factors. In the absence of any evidence supporting this second hypothesis we will, for want of any better alternative, consider the first one.

If the detour was a matter of personal choice, we would seem to have to look to the *sīra nabawiyya* for an explanation: perhaps the answer lies in the symbolism of the *miʿrāj*—the 'Ascension'—and the archetypal itinerary traced out by the Prophet. In fact there are so many correlations and correspondences between the principal stages in the route of the *miʿrāj* and the chief stages in the destiny followed by Ibn ʿArabī that it is impossible to avoid trying to decipher and understand the second of these two journeys in terms of the first. In this perspective one can hardly fail to draw a parallel between—on the one hand—the episodes marking Ibn ʿArabī's quest from the very start of his vocation in Andalusia through to his arrival in the East in 598/1201 and—on the other hand—the passage through the first seven heavens in the Journey of Initiation. The last of these heavens is none other than the heaven of Abraham, whom Ibn ʿArabī went to offer his greetings to in Hebron before going on to the Prophet at Medina and arriving at last at the *bayt Allāh*, the House of God. This critical stage calls to mind the *wuṣūl*, the 'Arrival at God' which is the culminating point of the Ascension; and indeed the stage in question was marked by a series of major events which we will soon consider. Finally, the period in Ibn ʿArabī's life lasting from the year 600 to his death in 638—a period when he devoted himself almost entirely to the oral and written transmission of his teaching to a multitude of disciples—is comparable to the *rujūʿ*: the return to created beings which is the ultimate stage of the *miʿrāj*.

Whether or not Ibn ʿArabī's geographical itinerary was, like his spiritual one, governed by this 'imitation of the Prophet', the fact is that at the end of his long journey from West to East he arrived at the 'navel of the earth', the 'Mother of Cities'. It was here that the last act in Ibn ʿArabī's accession to the supreme function of sainthood was played out, in the sacred month of pilgrimage in the year 598. Prior events had certainly prepared him for this, but they were only annunciatory signs capable of being interpreted in various ways. This time the message was clear, without the slightest ambiguity. In 'God's Vast Earth' (*arḍ Allāh al-wāsiʿa*) in the Imaginal World, with the Seal of Universal Sainthood—Jesus—in attendance, Ibn ʿArabī saw himself solemnly consecrated by the Seal of Prophets—Muḥammad—as the

64. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Voyages*, pp.110–11.

most perfect Muḥammadan Heir: he in whom the *walāya muḥammadiyya* or Muḥammadan Sainthood had become manifest in the most global and complete form and in a way quite unique in the history of humanity. 'I saw him [the Prophet] in this [Imaginal] World, sovereign, quite unapproachable, protected from every gaze or glance, aided and assisted. The Messengers stood by him according to their rank; his community—which is the best of communities (Qur'ān 3:106)—surrounded him; the angels of Dominion stood around the throne of his Station and the angels engendered by [men's] actions were ranged in front of him. The Veracious [i.e. Abū Bakr] was seated on his sublime right, the Discriminator [ʿUmar] on his holy left; the Seal [Jesus] was squatting in front of him and speaking to him about the history of Woman; at the same time ʿAlī—grace and peace be upon him—was interpreting in his own language the words spoken by the Seal, and the Possessor of the two lights [ʿUthmān], wearing the cloak of his modesty, stood in front as is his custom[65] . . .. He [the Prophet] saw me behind the Seal [i.e. Jesus]—*I was standing there because of the similarity between his status and mine*—and said to him: "This man is your equal, your son and your friend. Draw up for him in front of me the seat of tamarisk". He then gestured to me and said: "Rise up Muḥammad, take your place on this seat and sing the praises of He who sent me—and mine as well, because in you there is a portion of me which can no longer tolerate being far from me: it is that portion which governs your innermost reality" . . .. Then the Seal drew up the seat on that solemn spot. On the top of it the following words were inscribed in blue light: "*This is the purest of the Muḥammadan stations! He who seats himself upon it is his Heir; he has been sent by God to preserve the Sacred Law!*" In that moment I was granted the Gifts of Wisdoms; and it was as if the Totalities of Words (*jawāmiʿ al-kalim*) had been bestowed upon me . . .. Finally, from this sublime vision I was sent back to the lower world, and I put down the holy praise I had just uttered as a prologue to this book.'[66]

Is this 'investiture of the Shaikh al-Akbar at the Supreme Centre' (to use Michel Vâlsan's phrase) a doublet of that other investiture which took place at Cordoba in 586, where Ibn ʿArabī had also seen the Elect of God assembled around him? Undoubtedly it is, and yet by his own admission on that first occasion only the prophet Hūd had talked to him; as for the prophet Muḥammad, he had remained in the background. A comparison of the texts

65. For this portion of the text use has been made, with some modifications, of Michel Vâlsan's translation in *Études traditionnelles*, § 311, October–November 1953, pp.302–3; Vâlsan's invaluable notes are also worth consulting. For the remainder of the text cf. *Seal of the Saints*, pp.130–31.

66. For this same event see also the continuation of the *qaṣīda* cited in chapter 6; *Dīwān*, p.333.

justifies the conclusion that what is involved here is an ordered series of initiatory stages, each confirming but also supplementing the previous one. The Cordoba vision was simply intended to announce to the young Ibn ʿArabī that he had been designated the Muḥammadan Seal; the incident that occurred a few years later at Fez, probably at the end of the *miʿrāj* described in chapter 367 of the *Futūḥāt*, reaffirmed and clarified this divine election. As for what happened in Mecca, it marked the definitive and solemn fulfilment of the divine promise, and the recognition by the Messengers of God—that is, by the representatives of all the communities prior to Islam—of the universality of the office conferred on the Shaikh al-Akbar: a kind of pact of allegiance in the tabernacle of Sainthood. It was no longer a matter just of an event but of an *advent*: of the advent *in history* of an eternal secret inscribed in the Divine Knowledge. The Seal of Muḥammadan Sainthood is not simply the individual who in his own person manifests the fullness of the Prophet's *walāya* or sainthood and after whom no one else will again have access to this impassable summit. He is also—and already was even before his appearance on earth—the source of all sainthood in just the same way that Muḥammad, or rather the Muḥammadan Reality (*ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya*), always was the source of all prophecy from the year dot at the very beginning of time, and always will be through to the fulfilment of the ages. The Seal, *khatm*, is not simply someone who terminates a series; he is the inviolable seal or 'stamp' preserving a treasure's integrity.

Here once again the relationship between the two functions of Seal of the Saints and Seal of the Prophets calls for a little clarification. To repeat what was said earlier: the Seal of the Saints is simply the *nā'ib* or substitute for the Seal of the Prophets within the ranks of sainthood. In the case of the person of the Prophet, sainthood (*walāya*) is 'veiled' by prophecy (*nubuwwa*); in the case of the Seal of the Saints it is openly displayed. And yet 'there can be . . . no question of any superiority over the Seal of the Prophets on the part of the Seal of Muḥammadan Sainthood, because all in all both functions plainly belong to one and the same being'.[67] In other words, the Seal of the Saints is simply the human medium for the manifestation in history of the most intimate aspect of the Muḥammadan Reality. Ibn ʿArabī emphasises this point in his own language by insisting on referring to the Seal as 'heir' (*wārith*): he himself has received from another the treasure of which he is the guardian.

Another passage in the *Futūḥāt* apparently also referring to Ibn ʿArabī's investiture makes it clear that the highest degree of sainthood does not—in spite of assertions to the contrary by opponents of Ibn ʿArabī such as Ibn

67. M. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, p.138.

Taymiyya—encroach on the prerogatives of messengers (*rusūl*) or prophets (*anbiyā'*). 'When, as one of the *wāṣilūn* [literally 'those who arrive'] of my time, I in turn arrived at this divine Gate, I found it open and without either guard or doorkeeper. I remained there until *I had been reclothed in the Robe of Honour of the Prophetic Legacy*. I then caught sight of a closed skylight. I was going to knock on it when I was told: "There's no point in knocking! It will not open". "But why is it there then?." I asked. I was told: "That is the Skylight of the Prophets and the Messengers; when the Religion had been made perfect it was bolted. It was through this door that the prophets were cloaked in the Robes of Honour of the Laws." '[68] Sometimes Ibn ʿArabī defines supreme sainthood as *nubuwwa ʿāmma* or *muṭlaqa*: 'general' or 'free' prophecy. However, this is in no way equivalent to confusing it with *nubuwwat al-tashrīʿ*, or legislative prophecy in the strict sense of the term.

The account of the 'investiture' which was quoted in part earlier on comes from the *khuṭba* or prologue to the *Futūḥāt*. The first chapter describes an event which also occurred at around the time of Ibn ʿArabī's arrival in Mecca, although no exact date for it is given. An enigmatic encounter took place near the Kaʿba, the temple of God which he was to hear himself being told is the 'Heart of Existence', and in front of the Black Rock, symbol of the Divine Right Hand.[69] 'Know, my noble friend and intimate companion, that after I arrived in the Mecca of Benedictions, the Treasury of spiritual tranquillities and movements, and after I experienced there what I experienced,[70] there came a time when I happened to be performing the ritual circuits around the Ancient Temple. As I was carrying out the circumambulations and reciting the formulas of glorification, praise, magnification and Oneness—now kissing the Black Rock, now touching the Yemenite Corner, now drawing near to the Wall of Multazam—as I was standing in a state of ecstasy in front of the Black Rock I encountered the Evanescent Youth, the Silent Speaker, He who is neither alive nor dead, the Simple Composite, He who envelops and is enveloped. When I saw him perform the ritual circuits around the Temple, like a living person revolving round a person who has died, I recognised his true reality and his metaphorical form, and I understood that the circuit round the Temple is like the prayer over a corpse . . .. Then God revealed to me the dignity of this Youth and his transcendence with regard to "where" and "when". When I recognised his dignity and his descent (*inzāl*), when I

68. *Fut.*, III, p.513.

69. *Fut.*, I, pp.47–51; ed. O. Yahia, I, pp.218–30. Regarding the incident in question cf. Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, pp.279–81, and the (rather disappointing) article by Fritz Meier, 'The Mystery of the Ka'ba', Eranos Yearbooks, Bollingen Series, XXX, vol.II, pp.149–68. For both translation and notes I am largely indebted to an unpublished article by Michel Vâlsan.

70. Are we to see in this an allusion to the earlier episode?

saw his rank in existence and his state, I embraced his right side, wiped away the sweat of revelation on his forehead and declared to him: "Look upon him who aspires to your company and desires your intimacy!" He replied to me using signs and enigmas he had created so that he would never have to speak except in symbols: "When you recognise, understand and realise my symbolic language, you know that it can never be grasped either by the most eloquent of orators or by the most competent of rhetoricians" . . .. He gestured to me and I understood. The reality of his Beauty unveiled itself to me and I was overcome with love. I became powerless and was instantly overwhelmed. When I recovered from my swoon, my sides shot through with fear,[71] he knew I had realised who he was . . .. He said to me: "Observe the details of my constitution and the disposition of my form! You will find what you ask of me written upon me, because I neither speak nor converse. I have no knowledge apart from the knowledge of Myself; My Essence does not differ from My Names. I am Knowledge, the Known and the Knower; I am Wisdom, the Sapiential Deed and the Sage!" '

Who is this 'Youth' (*fatā*), described now as an angel, now as a human being? Is he the 'personification of the Holy Spirit', as Michel Vâlsan has suggested in an unpublished study? Is he Ibn ᶜArabī's own luminous double, his 'celestial twin', as Henry Corbin believed? Or is he a dazzling theophany that manifested itself on the spot referred to by God as His House? These interpretations are by no means mutually contradictory. At any rate the encounter revealed to Ibn ᶜArabī his own essential reality ('He revealed to me all my names; and I knew myself; and I knew what was not me'[72]). But it was not the first encounter. As we see from his *Kitāb al-isrā'*, dating from his time in the Maghreb, he had already met this 'Youth' at the start of his 'Journey by Night' when he retraced the steps of the Prophet, and on that occasion the Youth had called out to him: 'You are yourself the cloud veiling your own sun! So recognise the essential Reality of your being!'[73]

Out of this silent dialogue with the 'Youth' a book was born. Apart from being a testimony to his own destiny and his own visionary experience, the 'Book of the Meccan Revelations' is also—on Ibn ᶜArabī's own admission—a faithful transcription of all the things he was allowed to contemplate on that particular day in the form of the Spirit he encountered. ' "I am [the Youth said to me] the ripe orchard and the full harvest! Now lift my veils and read what is contained in my inscriptions. Whatever you observe in me, put it in your

71. The details of this incident are reminiscent of Moses' swoon when he asked to see God on the mountain-top (Qur'ān 7:134).

72. *Fut.*, I, p.51.

73. *Kitāb al-isrā'*, Hyderabad 1948, p.14.

book and preach it to all your friends".[74] So I raised his veils and read his inscriptions. The light lodged within him enabled my eyes to see the hidden Knowledge which he contains and conceals. The first line I read, and the first secret with which I became acquainted, is what I will now record in writing in the second chapter.'

In an article already referred to, Fritz Meier starts by offering a rather obscure analysis of Ibn ᶜArabī's encounter with the 'Youth' and then goes on to raise the question as to what could possibly be meant by the fact that (if we are to believe him) Ibn ᶜArabī 'had really read the five hundred and sixty chapters of the *Meccan Revelations* in a supernatural book after his circumambulation'.[75] In fact the question is purely rhetorical. To begin with, it must be noted that it was in a *being*, not in a book, that Ibn ᶜArabī deciphered the secrets he was subsequently to transcribe. The distinction is fundamental: in front of the Kaᶜba he was confronted with a reality in the person of the 'Youth'—not just with the words that describe him. The Youth remained silent. It was his actual constitution (*nash'atuhu*) that contained all the knowledge of which Ibn ᶜArabī was to become the guardian and interpreter; and it contained the knowledge in symbolic form (*ramzan*) and synthetically—hence the need for the *tafṣīl* or 'detailed exposition' alluded to in the chapter title. And secondly, regardless of how one chooses to explain the vision, it is quite wrong to suppose that the *Futūḥāt* immediately assumed their final form in Ibn ᶜArabī's consciousness as soon as he had seen what he saw. Quite the opposite is the truth. As we will see, very specific inspirations were to intervene repeatedly throughout the process of composition—which was to span a good number of years—and take Ibn ᶜArabī himself by surprise. Also, his disciples' questions and comments were to prompt him to add passages either clarifying or supplementing his discussion of the same subject earlier on. So, for example, when in chapter 296 he tackles the invariably sensitive issue of the attribution of acts, he mentions that a remark by his pupil Ibn Sawdakīn had led him to try a different approach to the matter here to the one he had adopted in chapter 2. But the most important point to bear in mind is that—however crucial his encounter with the 'Youth' may have been for him, and however fundamental the role played by the figure as the point of departure for the writing of the *Futūḥāt*—at the time of the encounter in 598 Ibn ᶜArabī was already a 'knower of God' (*ᶜārif bi-llāh*) and that the broad outlines of his teaching had already assumed a finished form in his early works. This helps to explain the incorporation in the *Futūḥāt* of a

74. This sentence is missing in O. Yahia's critical edition, but occurs in the Būlāq edition, 1329H, I, p.51.

75. F. Meier, art. cit.

number of earlier texts. Small treatises, repeated verbatim, become chapters in the *opus magnum*; fragments from more extensive works (for example the *Inshā' al-dawā'ir* and *Tadbīrāt ilāhiyya*) are inserted here and there; and earlier writings are expanded, as in the case of the responses to Tirmidhī's famous questionnaire which fill a hundred dense pages in chapter 73 but in their earlier, skeletal version—the *Jawāb mustaqīm*—formed a shorter treatise.

As already mentioned, on a number of occasions Ibn ᶜArabī claims that his writings—and indeed his teaching as a whole, both oral and written—are inspired. 'Everything I say in my tuition and in my works derives from the Presence of the Qur'ān and from its treasures, to which I have been granted the key of understanding.'[76] But in the case of the *Futūḥāt* this claim is expressed in more specific terms. In their case, he claims, divine inspiration determined not only the content of the message but also the form of its presentation: hence, he warns, the apparent incoherency in the ordering of the chapters. Regarding chapter 88 (on the 'secrets concealed in the legal statutes'), he writes that 'it would have been preferable to place this chapter in front of the one I wrote on the ritual acts of worship (*ᶜibādāt*); however, things turned out this way. In fact the sequence was not of my choosing . . ..'[77] But although the sequence of ideas in this greatest of his works is often disconcerting, one is bound to credit the author with a soberness of style only too rare in Sufi literature. Concise and to the point,[78] his prose in the *Futūḥāt* is generally speaking more easily accessible than in some of his earlier writings such as the *ᶜAnqā' mughrib*, or the superb *Kitāb al-isrā'* with its cadences and symbolic expressions that defy any attempt at translation.

Massignon's verdict on the *Futūḥāt* was admittedly very different. 'With their authoritarian style—formal and pompous, syntactically clear but crammed with technical expressions—the general theses and personal visions that he [Ibn ᶜArabī] expounds in a uniformly impassive and icy tone provide extremely valuable indications as to the idea he had formed for himself of Ḥallāj's personality'.[79] The reference to Ḥallāj is clearly the key to Massignon's attitude to Ibn ᶜArabī: as the author of the *Passion of al-Hallāj* he was never able to forgive the author of the *Futūḥāt* for the reservations he expressed about Ḥallāj on a number of occasions. 'Authoritarian' he certainly was—if we take the term to mean that Muḥyī l-Dīn expressed himself with the authority of a man whose path has led him to the *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, to unshakeable certainty, and who whenever he describes the states and degrees of the Way bases himself quite explicitly on his own experience in each of them. But as to the terms 'icy' and 'impassive', the truth is that in Ibn ᶜArabī—and in the *Futūḥāt* in particular—there is no light without warmth or knowledge without love. His references to his masters and friends are often charged with emotion. His compassion was universal: for him the heroic generosity or *futuwwa* of the saint necessarily extends to all created beings—the vegetable and mineral kingdoms included.[80] As for his use of technical terms in his writings, and specifically in the *Futūḥāt*, it may have seemed excessive to Massignon but was surely fully justified by his desire for accuracy in a work which was quite deliberately pitched at an élite audience for whom this distinctive vocabulary represented no obstacle to understanding.

'This is the purest Muḥammadan Station. Whoever ascends to it is his Heir. That person has been sent by God to preserve the Sacred Law.' In a sense it is true to say that for the Shaikh al-Akbar his entire life and his entire teaching (the one is inseparable from the other) find their meaning in this inscription adorning the 'seat of tamarisk' that he saw in the Great Vision at Mecca. On the one hand, it defines Ibn ᶜArabī's status in the sphere of sainthood: he is Supreme Heir to the Prophet, universal legatee of all the Sciences of Muḥammad which do not derive exclusively from legislative prophecy. On the other hand, it spells out explicitly the mission he felt it was his duty to perform within the body of the community: the mission of preserving the *sharīᶜa* or Sacred Law. The full implication of this becomes immediately apparent when one realises that for Ibn ᶜArabī *sharīᶜa*, revealed law, and *ḥaqīqa*, Essential Reality, are mutually equivalent: as he says in one place, 'The revealed law and the Essential Reality are identical', and, a little further on, 'The *sharīᶜa* is the *ḥaqīqa*'.[81] In other words, preservation of the Essential Reality is synonymous with preserving for future generations the complete means of access to the one and only prophetic heritage which is capable of being transmitted: sainthood or *walāya*. Ibn ᶜArabī's own function must on no account be confused with the function of a prophet-legislator: he himself is so emphatic about this point that we will need to return to it later.[82] The revelation is closed; the *sharīᶜa* is established. Where his role does lie is firstly in gathering together the treasure of the Wisdoms that had been bestowed on him with a view to assuring their protection; and secondly in ensuring their transmission down through space and time to the coming of the 'Seal of

76. *Fut.*, III, p.334.
77. *Fut.*, II, p.163; cf. also *Fut.*, I, p.59, II, pp.209, 216, III, p.456, IV, p.74, etc.
78. Cf. *Fut.*, I, p.597, where Ibn ᶜArabī states: 'It is my principle in this book to be—as far as possible—concise and brief'. See also *Fut.*, I, p.391.
79. *Passion*, II, p.395.
80. *Fut.*, II, p.283.
81. Cf. *Fut.*, II, pp.562–3 with M. Chodkiewicz, *La lettre et la loi*, pp.27–9.
82. Cf. e.g. *Fut.*, II, pp.24, 84, 531; II, p.456; IV, p.75.

Children' who will also—according to the final paragraph in chapter two of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*—be the last man born on this earth and the last of the saints. To fulfil this task Ibn ᶜArabī embarked on the extraordinary doctrinal synthesis presented in the *Futūḥāt*. In this work—first written between 599/1202 and 629/1231, then revised and expanded between 632/1234 and 636/1238, and in its original edition consisting of no less than thirty-seven volumes[83]—all the particulars of the *sharīᶜa-ḥaqīqa* are expounded. Nothing is omitted: neither the 'letter' of the Law nor its 'spirit'. As a compendium of spiritual sciences—ranging from the most fundamental concepts of jurisprudence, clearly and coherently expounded in the last four hundred and fifty pages of the first volume of the Cairo edition, through the metaphysical doctrine and method of initiation expounded in over five hundred chapters, to the *sunna*, which although omnipresent is dealt with specifically in the *bāb al-waṣāyā* that brings the work to a close—the *Futūḥāt* has no precedent. For the religious community (*umma*), which cannot continue to exist without the presence in its midst of saints to whom this treasury has been opened, the faithful transmission of these spiritual sciences is the very condition of its survival.

To be able to achieve this Ibn ᶜArabī was simultaneously obliged to do the job of a lexicographer, drawing up lists of the luxuriant terminology used in Sufism, clarifying it and refining it. That explains the frequency of the technical terms (*iṣṭilāḥāt*) plus the definitions of them which Massignon found so irritating. This revision of Sufi technical vocabulary has two outstanding characteristics. The first is Ibn ᶜArabī's predominant concern to accord systematic preference to terminology based either on Qur'ānic usage or on terms found in the *ḥadīth*. So, for example, he reverses the hierarchical relationship of terms normally found in Sufi parlance by placing *ᶜilm*, 'science', above *maᶜrifa* or 'knowledge', on the grounds that the first of these words occurs in the Qur'ān while the second does not. He also points out that God refers to Himself as *ᶜālim* or *ᶜalīm*, but never as *ᶜārif*.[84]

The second characteristic is more subtle and difficult to discern, but it expresses at the lexicographical level the very essence of Ibn ᶜArabī's teaching. This is what Suᶜād Ḥakīm (to whom we are indebted for the methodical analysis of his vocabulary)[85] has called *miᶜrāj al-kalima*: the 'assumption' of traditional technical terms with the intention of leading them back from their phenomenological or methodological meaning to a purely

83. For the compilation of the *Futūḥāt* see O. Yahia's introduction to volume 1 of his critical edition.

84. *Fut.*, I, pp.134, 718; II, p.318; IV, p.45.

85. Suᶜād al-Ḥakīm, *Muᶜjam*, Beirut 1981.

metaphysical significance. To cite just one out of many possible examples: the word *khalwa* refers initially to the practice of 'retreat', but to Ibn ᶜArabī its only true reference is to the eternal solitude of the Divine Essence: a solitude from the point of view of which the *mā siwā llāh*—the totality of things perceived by contingent beings as 'other than God'—is mere illusion. The same incessant orientation towards Unity also manifests itself in the remarkable way that Ibn ᶜArabī devotes the second of the seven sections of the *Futūḥāt* (the *faṣl al-muᶜāmalāt*) to compiling an inventory of the classical series of 'spiritual stations' (*maqāmāt*): *tawakkul* (confident trust in God), *shukr* (gratitude), *ṣabr* (patience) and so forth. Each of these notions implies a duality and, consequently, an imperfection which needs to be overcome. This is why, from chapter 118 through to chapter 175, the description of each of these stations is followed paradoxically by the negation of what has just been affirmed: the *maqām al-ᶜubūdiyya* ('station of servitude') is succeeded by the *maqām tark al-ᶜubūdiyya* ('station of the abandonment of servitude'), the *maqām al-ikhlāṣ* ('station of sincerity') is followed by the *maqām tark al-ikhlāṣ* ('station of the abandonment of sincerity'), and so on, with the negative title of the second station in each of these pairs conveying transcendence of the limitations inherent in the first. In other words, whoever speaks of servitude (*ᶜubūdiyya*) automatically posits the existence of lordship (*rubūbiyya*) and in so doing draws a distinction between 'master' and 'servant'. However eminent his spiritual rank, he is still a prisoner of multiplicity and must consequently abandon all these stations in turn until eventually he attains to the 'non-station' (*lā maqām*) which is the point where there is only the One without a second, where God is 'Alone, without associate' (*waḥdahu lā sharīka lahu*).[86]

One point should be made here in passing. The examples just cited show the Shaikh al-Akbar transposing and extending the meaning of terms already used in the Sufism of earlier centuries, and in fact when doing so he more often than not cites the names of those who first introduced them into the common language of the *ahl Allāh* or people of God: Sahl al-Tustarī, Junayd, Ḥallāj (for the binomial *ṭūl/ᶜarḍ*) and so on. However, these same examples also show that by no means can he be accused of rashly coining new words: of the nine hundred or so terms and expressions listed by S. Ḥakīm, the majority are already attested in earlier texts. Ibn ᶜArabī also went to the trouble of defining these terms, basing his definitions largely on scriptural authority and on etymology. Generally speaking he would do so on several different occasions, and not just in the *Kitāb iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, or 'Book of Sufi Terminology', which is no more than a brief *aide-mémoire* that he also

86. For the idea of *lā maqām* (or *lā muqām*) cf. *Fut.*, III, pp.105, 500, 506; IV, p.28.

reproduced in inverse order in chapter 73 of the *Futūḥāt*. If these terms present the reader with difficulties, that is due rather to the *non-technical* use to which he put them. The word *wujūd* provides one illustration of this kind of problem—which is in fact far from unique to the corpus of Ibn ʿArabī's writings although in his case it can be particularly annoying. This one word can occur in the space of just a few lines with a disarming multiplicity of meanings—as a verbal noun from *wajada*, 'to find'; as a term of reference for the created universe in opposition to its Creator; as expressive of the concept of existence; and as applicable in its strict sense to Being (*actus essendi*). This polysemy, or variety of meanings of one single word, is one of the most perilous privileges of Arabic, and without any doubt is at least partly responsible for the misinterpretations—not only by Ibn ʿArabī's opponents but also by some of his defenders—of the notion of *waḥdat al-wujūd* or 'Oneness of Being'.[87] Similarly, the word *ḥaqq* can signify not only 'God' (as in the traditional Arabic contrast with the term *khalq*, 'creation') but also 'reality', 'truth' and 'right'; it too sometimes occurs with embarrassing frequency, although in this case the plurality of its meanings has not had such unfortunate consequences.

It is certainly no accident that this project of drawing together and consolidating the heritage of Islamic doctrine was initiated at one of the most dramatic moments in the history of the Muslim world. Signs of great turmoil were visible everywhere; Ibn ʿArabī had encountered them at every stage of his journey from Andalusia to the Mashreq. The Reconquista in the West, the Crusades and soon afterwards the Mongols in the East were all creating breaches in the structure of the *dār al-islām*; it was falling apart and in danger of collapsing. Caliph Nāṣir, a contemporary of Ibn ʿArabī, was well aware of the situation and tried in his own way to restore and strengthen the edifice. But his efforts led to nothing: in the West, the Christians succeeded in recapturing Andalusia (Seville fell in 646/1248, only a few years after Ibn ʿArabī's death), and meanwhile in the East the Mongols—the worst enemy Islam had ever had to confront—brought the caliphate to an end in 656/1258.

It was also in front of the Kaʿba, and also towards the end of the year 598, that the Shaikh al-Akbar met the woman who was to inspire his finest poems. Night had fallen; in the grip of ecstasy Ibn ʿArabī started performing the ritual

87. For the notion of *waḥdat al-wujūd* see W. Chittick's comments in *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, Albany 1989, p.3. The expression is in fact never used by Ibn ʿArabī; it seems to have been used for the first time—and even then only rarely—by Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī in the *Miftāḥ al-ghayb* and *Nafaḥāt ilāhiyya*, and subsequently by Ibn Sabʿīn and above all by Farghānī in his commentary on Ibn al-Fārid's *Tāʾiyya*. But it would appear to have been Ibn Taymiyya who—for polemical purposes—generalised the usage of the term as an emblematic designation for Ibn ʿArabī's metaphysics.

circumambulations round the Temple, while at the same time composing verses at the top of his voice, when he became aware of a presence by his side. 'All I felt was a light tap on my shoulder, made by the gentlest of hands. I turned round and saw a young woman, one of the daughters of Rūm. Never have I witnessed a face that was more graceful, or speech that was so pleasant, intelligent, subtle and spiritual. She surpassed the people of her age in her discernment, her erudition, her beauty and her knowledge. She said to me: "Oh master! What did you just say?" '[88] One by one Ibn ʿArabī repeated to her the verses he had uttered only a moment earlier; one by one the young Persian woman interpreted them. Pleasantly surprised by such insight, the shaikh asked her her name; 'Freshness of the Eyes', was her reply. As Ibn ʿArabī explains, 'After that I took my leave of her and departed. I subsequently made her acquaintance and spent time in her company'. 'Consolation' and 'Source of the Sun' were two of the many names he gave this woman who was to become for him what Beatrice was to become for Dante:[89] Niẓām, daughter of the imām of the Maqām Ibrāhīm, whom he met on his arrival in Mecca. 'When I arrived in Mecca in 598 I spent time in the company of a gathering of virtuous people: a group of individuals—both men and women—who were learned and pious. Among them, even though all of them were quite excellent, I saw none more preoccupied with their soul or more concerned with their actions than the shaikh, the imām of the Maqām Ibrāhīm . . . Abū Shujāʿ Ẓāhir b. Rostem al-Iṣfahānī (God have mercy upon him), and his sister, a woman very advanced in age, the wise *shaykha* of the Ḥijāz, Fakhr al-Nisā' bint Rostem.'[90] From the father, Abū Shujaʿ, Ibn ʿArabī received Tirmidhī's collection of *ḥadīths*; from Abū Shujāʿ's sister, Fakhr al-Nisā', an *ijāza ʿāmma*; and from the man's daughter, Niẓām, the inspiration which some years later would induce him to write the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*, 'The Interpreter of Ardent Desires'. As Ibn ʿArabī declares in his preface to this *dīwān*: 'Every time I mention a name it is her I am naming. Every time I refer to an abode (*dār*) it is her abode I am describing. However,' he immediately goes on to caution the reader, 'in composing these verses my allusions throughout were to divine inspirations and spiritual revelations . . .'.[91] His carefully worded precautions were in vain, and did not prevent the jurists of

88. *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*, Beirut edition, 1961, preface, p.11.

89. In this connection it is worth noting that in a highly controversial study Asín Palacios tried to show that Dante's *Divine Comedy* was to a large extent inspired by some of Ibn ʿArabī's works, and especially by the *Kitāb al-isrā'*. Cf. *La Escatología en la Divina Comedia*, Madrid 1919; also R. Guénon, *L'Esotérisme de Dante*, Paris 1984, pp.39–43; L. Massignon, *Opera minora*, I, pp.57–81.

90. *Tarjumān*, p.7.

91. Ibid., p.9.

Aleppo from accusing him of producing an erotic work under the pretence that they were mystical poems.[92] He subsequently decided to write a commentary on the *Tarjumān*[93] in which he disclosed and spelled out explicitly the spiritual meanings concealed behind expressions normally used in the language of courtly love.

As for the date of composition of the poems in the *Tarjumān*, we must not be misled by the passage from the preface quoted above in which Ibn ᶜArabī states that he met Abū Shujāᶜ in 598. As Nicholson has demonstrated by referring to the prefaces of the second and third recensions of the text,[94] Ibn ᶜArabī in fact only composed the *Tarjumān*, at Mecca, during the months of Rajab, Shaᶜbān and Ramaḍān in the year 611. To the arguments adduced by Nicholson two others can be added. Firstly, in the preface in question Ibn ᶜArabī cites the *taraḥḥum* formula immediately after mentioning Abū Shujāᶜ—the implication being that he was writing some time after the death of Abū Shujāᶜ, which occurred in 609/1212.[95] Secondly, in the poems that go to make up the *Tarjumān* he repeatedly refers to Baghdad and to various places in the city,[96] but he only visited Baghdad for the first time in 601/1204; in 598 all he knew of the East was Egypt, Palestine and the Hijāz.

Among the places in Baghdad mentioned in the *Tarjumān* is the Dār al-Falak, a convent for women which—as Ibn ᶜArabī explains in his commentary—was situated on the banks of the Tigris near Musanna.[97] Massignon took this particular verse along with several others also referring to Baghdad as evidence that Niẓām—the woman who had inspired the *Tarjumān* and to whom the work was in a sense dedicated—had withdrawn into this convent, which happens to have been the first ever built in Islam.[98] This is far from impossible: it would in fact be quite easy to imagine her going off to live in the convent after her father's death in 609H. However, the allusions are altogether too vague and inadequate to allow us to be categorical on the point. As it happens, a passage in the *Muḥāḍarat al-abrār* would even seem to suggest that the woman in the convent referred to by Ibn ᶜArabī in his poetry

92. Ibid., p.10.

93. The commentary in question, called *Dhakhā'ir al-aᶜlāq*, is published in the margin of the 1961 Beirut edition of the *Tarjumān*.

94. See his edition and translation of the *Tarjumān*, London 1911 (repr. 1978), pp.4–6. O. Yahia failed to take Nicholson's comments into account, because in R.G. § 767 he dates the *Tarjumān* to 598.

95. *Shadharāt*, V, p.37.

96. Cf. e.g. III, v.10; XXX, v.35; LIV, vv.1–6; LVI, v.1; LXI, v.1.

97. *Dhakhā'ir al-aᶜlāq*, published in the margin of the *Tarjumān*, Beirut 1961, p.184, LIV, vv.6–7.

98. *Passion*, II, p.135.

was not Niẓām at all but one of his wives. In the passage in question[99] he starts by describing the circumstances of his encounter with Niẓām at the Kaᶜba in terms almost identical to the ones he uses in describing the meeting in the *Tarjumān*, and he then goes on to quote the first four poems from the *Tarjumān* itself, inserting the following remark between the second poem and the third: 'I used to have a wife, who was a source of joy but whom time had separated from me; the memory of her came to my mind—at that particular time she was living in the Halba quarter [of Baghdad]—and I recited . . .'. The wife in question cannot possibly be Niẓām: the wording of this passage, and the expressions Ibn ᶜArabī uses when referring to Niẓām both in the *Tarjumān* and in his commentary on it, clearly argue against such an interpretation.[100] In the present state of our knowledge the identity of the woman referred to here is impossible to establish, but that is no great loss because the matter is of purely secondary importance. As far as Niẓām is concerned, whatever her historical destiny happens to have been, the fact is that we are indebted to her for one of the masterpieces of mystical poetry in Arabic—and above all for the famous lines in which the Shaikh al-Akbar declares:

My heart has become capable of all forms:
For gazelles, a meadow, for monks, a monastery,
A temple for idols, the pilgrim's Kaᶜba,
The Tablets of the Torah, the Book of the Qur'ān.
I profess the religion of Love, and whatever the direction
Taken by its mount, Love is my religion and my faith.[101]

IN THE SHADOW OF THE KAᶜBA

Mercy of God towards those who serve,
God has placed you among minerals
You House of God! Light of my heart!
Freshness of my eyes! My heart!
You who in truth are the secret of existence —
My sanctuary! Purity of my love!
Oh, Kaᶜba of God, my life![102]

99. *Muḥāḍarat*, II, pp.32–4.

100. Regarding the nature of the relationship between Ibn ᶜArabī and Niẓām cf. H. Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, pp.136–45.

101. *Tarjumān*, XI, vv.13–6, pp.43–4.

102. *Fut.*, I, p.701.

As will already have become clear, the Kaʿba occupied a central place in the events that marked Ibn ʿArabī's first stay at Mecca. Within a short space of time close links of a rather amazing nature were established between it and him—links that exceeded and surpassed the bonds normally formed between the pilgrim and the House of God. In Ibn ʿArabī's eyes the Kaʿba, like everything else in the universe, is a living being that speaks and listens. This means he was not surprised when one day it called out to him and demanded that he perform the ritual circumambulations around it at the same time as the spring of Zamzam insisted on him drinking its water; he specifies that both the Kaʿba and Zamzam pronounced their requests quite audibly.[103] Afraid that their dignity would veil his own proximity to God, the Shaikh countered with a polite refusal—in poetic form. According to him the rank of the Kaʿba as locus of epiphany for the essential Realities was, in spite of its unquestionable nobility, inferior to his own. Hurt by these words, the House determined to avenge itself. One cold and rainy night in the year 600/1204,[104] Ibn ʿArabī had rashly ventured alone into the *ḥaram* (the sacred area around the Kaʿba) to perform the circumambulation or *ṭawāf* when the Kaʿba threatened to crush him: 'When I came level with the Drainpipe, behind the Black Stone, I looked at the Kaʿba. It seemed to me to have hitched up its veils, risen from its foundations and be bracing itself to eject me as and when on the course of the *ṭawāf* I reached the Syrian corner, so as to prevent me from performing the circumambulations. It started threatening me in words that I heard with my ears. I was terrified. God revealed to me such displeasure and anger on its part that I was quite incapable of leaving. I hid behind the Wall to take cover against its blows, using the Wall as a shield that I interposed between it and myself. By God, I heard it telling me: "Come on then, come forward so that I can show you what I'm going to do to you! How you have debased my rank and elevated the rank of the son of Adam! You have attributed to the gnostics pre-excellence over me! Through the power of Him who alone holds power I will not permit you to perform the circumambulations around me!" I meditated for a moment and understood that God had wanted to teach me a lesson, and I thanked Him for it. From that moment onwards the fear I had experienced on seeing it hitch up its veils—just as someone hitches up his clothing when preparing to jump—simply vanished . . .. I improvised some verses for it, to appease the wrath I had perceived in it. The more I spoke its praises, the more it eased up and sank back down into its foundations. It seemed pleased with what it heard me say,

103. *Fut.*, I, p.700: '*su'āl nuṭq masmūʿ bi l-udhn*'.

104. The incident can be dated on the basis of information provided in the preface and the reading certificates of the *Tāj al-rasā'il*, which was written directly after the event. Cf. O. Yahia, R.G. § 736.

and finally returned to its normal state. It reassured me and said I could complete the *ṭawāf* . . .'.[105] After calm had been restored and peace had been made, Ibn ʿArabī, anxious to demonstrate his gratitude and feelings of respect, composed a collection of eight letters in rhymed prose, entitled the *Tāj al-rasā'il*, in homage to the Kaʿba.[106]

The Kaʿba also played the central role in another vision in which the Shaikh al-Akbar saw his accession to the office of Seal of the Saints confirmed once again. 'When I was in Mecca, in 599, I had a dream in which I saw the Kaʿba built of bricks that were alternately made of silver and gold. The construction had been completed; there was nothing left to add. I contemplated it and admired its beauty. But then I turned towards the side located between the Yemenite and the Syrian corners. There, in a spot closer to the Syrian corner, I saw that the place intended for two bricks—a silver one and a golden one—was still empty on two rows of the wall, one above the other. In the upper row a golden brick was missing; in the lower row a silver one. I then saw myself being inserted into the place reserved for the two missing bricks. I myself was the two bricks; with them the wall was complete and the Kaʿba faultless. I was standing up, observing, and quite conscious that I was in a standing position; but at the same time I knew without the slightest doubt that I was those two bricks and those two bricks were me. Then I woke up, and gave thanks to God. Interpreting the vision, I said to myself: "In my category [i.e. the category of saints or *awliyā'*] I am among the 'followers', just as the Messenger of God is among the prophets, and perhaps it is through me that God has sealed sainthood . . .'.[107] To understand this incident—which, strangely enough, occurred after the consecration in 598—we need to remember that 599 was the year when the Shaikh al-Akbar entered the fortieth year of his life: a decisive turning-point according to Islamic tradition, in which the age of forty possesses a special significance. It was at the age of forty that the Prophet received the visit from the angel Gabriel; and forty is said to be the age at which a man reached his full maturity.[108] It would appear that Ibn ʿArabī's vision of the Kaʿba in this particular year simultaneously marked two separate events: firstly his transition through his fortieth year and secondly his transition, equally significant in terms of the journey of initiation, from the ascending stage of the *isrā'* to the descending one—the sacrificial return to created beings for the sake of guiding them.

It was also in front of the Kaʿba, in 599/1203, that Ibn ʿArabī was invested

105. *Fut.*, I, p.700.

106. The text has been published in an anthology called *Majmūʿ al-rasā'il*, Cairo 1328H.

107. *Fut.*, I, p.319, following M. Chodkiewicz's translation. Cf. his *Seal of the Saints*, p.128.

108. Cf. Qur'ān 46:15; Ibn Ḥanbal, II, 89.

with the *khirqa* for the third time. This time it was the *khirqa* of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, which he received from a man originally from Baghdad but then resident in Mecca: Yūnus b. Yaḥyā al-Hāshimī (*d.* 608/1211).[109] As in the case of Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Tamīmī of Fez, Yūnus al-Hāshimī was for Ibn ʿArabī simultaneously a spiritual master or *murshid* and one of his main teachers in *ḥadīth*.[110] However, Yūnus al-Hāshimī differed from Muḥammad b. Qāsim—whose qualifications as a *rāwī* had, it will be remembered, been questioned by Ibn al-Abbār—in that in this particular sphere his reputation was more solid: Ibn Ḥajar describes him as a dependable transmitter.[111] Among the *ḥadīth*s he transmitted to Ibn ʿArabī in the *ḥaram* facing the Kaʿba's Yemenite corner—a spot for which Ibn ʿArabī evidently had a special preference[112]—were *ḥadīth qudsiyya*: those 'holy sayings' in which God addressed Himself to men through the mouth of the Prophet. At this same period the Shaikh al-Akbar undertook the task of selecting forty of these *ḥadīth qudsiyya* and putting them together in a compilation that came to form the first part of the *Mishkāt al-anwār*.[113] Among the transmitters named in the *Mishkāt* we find—apart from Yūnus al-Hāshimī, Ḥabashī and M. b. Qāsim al-Tamīmī whom we have already met—a certain *muḥaddīth* called Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Faryābī (*d.* 646/1248)[114] and also the name of a disciple of Ibn ʿArabī called Muḥammad b. Khālid al-Ṣadafī al-Tilimsānī.[115] Had he already met this disciple in the West—where, as the *nisba* implies, Muḥammad b. Khālid originally came from? There is no way of knowing. However, it is worth noting that his name only occurs in Ibn ʿArabī's writings in connection with incidents from the year 599.[116] For example, it was at his request as well as Ḥabashī's that Ibn ʿArabī composed the *Ornament of the Abdāl* in Jumādā I 599 at Ṭā'if, where he had gone to meditate at the grave of Ibn ʿAbbās. This short treatise expounds the four cardinal virtues characteristic of this particular category of saints: silence, solitude, staying awake and fasting.[117]

109. *Kitāb nasab al-khirqa*, ms. Esad Efendi 1507, f° 96.

110. Cf. *Fut.*, I, pp.32, 309; II, p.338; IV, p.524; *Ijāza*, p.175.

111. *Lisān al-mīzān*, VI, p.335; cf. also *Shadharāt*, V, p.36.

112. A number of accounts indicate that this is where Ibn ʿArabī liked to meet his teachers or disciples. Cf. e.g. *Fut.*, I, pp.32, 71, 309; II, p.338.

113. *Mishkāt al-anwār*, Cairo 1329H, preface, p.5; trans. Muhammad Vâlsan, Paris 1984.

114. *GAL*, S.I., p.596; *Mishkāt*, §§ 7, 13, etc.

115. *Mishkāt*, §§ 5, 8, 9, etc. To date I have not found any references to M. b. Khālid al-Tilimsānī in the compilers.

116. *Fut.*, I, p.72; II, p.182; IV, p.552.

117. *Ḥilyat al-abdāl*, published at Hyderabad in 1948 and translated by Michel Vâlsan, Paris 1950. Details about the places, date and circumstances of composition are given at the beginning of the text.

Iranians, Ethiopians, Andalusians, Syrians, Egyptians . . .: vast numbers of pilgrims came from the most distant lands in both East and West to the Holy Places, to perform the *ḥajj* and in so doing renew the *mīthāq*, the Primordial Pact made with God by all men, without exception. But the Sacred House was also a temple of worship for other pilgrims who came from the World of the Mystery (*ʿālam al-ghayb*), the home of spirits. So it was that, in this same year 599, Ibn ʿArabī encountered the son of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, who had been dead for four centuries. 'One Friday at Mecca, after the communal prayer, I had started performing the *ṭawāf* when I saw a man of fine bearing, with a serious and impressive appearance, who was doing the ritual circumambulations in front of me. I looked at him a little closer to see if perhaps he was someone I knew. But I became aware that he was not a resident of Mecca; also, from his relaxed expression and vigour, that he had not just arrived after a journey. Then I saw him pass between two men who were holding onto each other as they performed the *ṭawāf*: he went through them without separating them and without them noticing anything. So I started following him, step by step, placing my feet just where he had put his; every time he lifted his foot from one particular spot I immediately put down my foot in the same place. Focussing my awareness on him, I didn't let him out of my sight because I didn't want to lose him. I passed between the same two men—they were still holding onto each other—whom he had passed through, and I got ahead of them in turn just as he had, without separating them, and this amazed me. When he had completed the seven cirumambulations and was preparing to leave, I grabbed him and greeted him. He returned my greeting with a smile, while I kept my eyes fastened on him out of fear of losing him: I had begun to suspect he was a spirit who had assumed a body and I knew that being looked at bound him. I said to him: "I know you are a spirit who has taken a body!" "You are correct," he replied. "Who are you?," I asked him. "I am al-Sabtī b. Hārūn al-Rashīd". "I would like to ask you some questions about your spiritual state when you were in this lower world". "Ask me your questions!" "I gather that you were called al-Sabtī because you used to work on Saturdays (*al-sabt*) to obtain food for the rest of the week". "What you have been told is quite correct". "Why did you choose Saturday rather than some other day of the week?" "A pertinent question. I had learned that God began the creation of the world on a Sunday and completed it on a Friday, and that when Saturday arrived He rested, placing one leg on the other and saying: 'I am the Sovereign'. This is what I had been told when I was alive. I said to myself I would do the same. So, from Sunday through to the sixth day I devoted myself to the worship of God, saying to myself: 'Just as He concerned Himself with us during those six days, I will dedicate myself to the adoration of Him during those six days—entirely to

Him, without concerning myself with the satisfaction of my individual soul. But on Saturdays I busied myself with my soul and obtained for it what it needed to survive for the rest of the week.' "

'At that instant God granted me an illumination (*fatḥ*), and I asked him: "Who was the Pole of your time?" He replied: "It was I; there's nothing in that to cause pride!" '[118]

It was, once again, while circling the Kaʿba—but this time in a dream—that Ibn ʿArabī made the acquaintance of one of his 'ancestors'. 'In a vision in which I was performing the *ṭawāf* round the Kaʿba, God showed me a group of people whom I did not know; they recited to me two verses of which I only remember one . . .. One of them, who had a name I had never heard the like of, said to me: "I am one of your ancestors". I asked him: "How long have you been dead?" He replied: "Around forty thousand years". I pointed out to him that even Adam himself had not lived so long ago. He said: "Which Adam are you referring to—to the Adam closest to you, or to another?" And I remembered a saying of the Prophet which states that God had created a hundred thousand Adams.'[119]

Finally, it was also near the Kaʿba—in fact behind the Wall of the Ḥanbalites, that Ibn ʿArabī was granted the privilege of being able to join a meeting of the seven *abdāl*, or 'substitutes'. 'I met the seven *abdāl* at Mecca, in the *ḥaram* behind the Wall of the Ḥanbalites; when I came upon them they were in the middle of performing their prayers. I greeted them, they returned my greeting, and we began a conversation. I have never seen people behave in such a way—so preoccupied were they with God. The only person I know who resembles them is Sāqiṭ al-Rafraf b. Saqīṭ al-ʿArsh.'[120]

*

As if to announce in advance the disasters that soon were to start crashing down on the *dār al-islām*, a series of catastrophes and strange phenomena occurred in the year 599 heralding the approach of the seventh century of the Hegira—the century that was to bring the destruction of the caliphate by the Mongol hordes. After the terrible epidemics which had decimated Egypt in 597–98, and the earthquakes which during the same period had shaken Syria and Palestine,[121] in 599 strange atmospheric phenomena manifested in the East. In the Yemen a wind of ashes swept over the country, plunging its

118. *Fut.*, IV, pp.11–12. The same encounter is also referred to in *Fut.*, I, p.638 and in II, p.15, where Ibn ʿArabī specifies that the meeting took place in 599.

119. *Fut.*, III, p.549; cf. also *Fut.*, III, p.348.

120. *Fut.*, II, pp.455–6; cf. also *Fut.*, II, p.14; *Rūḥ* § 53; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.141–2. There will be more to say about Sāqiṭ al-Rafraf in the next chapter.

121. *Tarājim*, pp.19–20.

population into complete and utter darkness. In the Ḥijāz and Iraq people saw the 'stars dance and disintegrate into fragments' in the sky. Abū Shāma noted that 'this had only happened twice before, at the birth of the Prophet and in the year 241; but this time it was far more spectacular'.[122]

We also have the Shaikh al-Akbar's own testimony about these events, which sealed the sixth century of the Hegira in so dramatic a way.[123] 'I once saw these streaks of light last for an hour at the most. I was in the middle of performing the *ṭawāf* when we spotted them—both I and the others who were circumambulating the Kaʿba. People were astounded; never had anyone seen a night with so many comets. They continued right through the night until daybreak. There were masses of them; they kept hitting each other like sparks from a fire, so much so that we were unable to see the stars. On witnessing this we said to each other that this was a sign heralding a grave event. Soon afterwards we were informed that an incident had occurred in the Yemen at exactly the same time we were witnessing this phenomenon. A wind of dust, similar to zinc, had borne down on the inhabitants of the Yemen; it was so dense that it covered the earth to knee-height. The people were terrified, all the more so because the atmosphere had become so dark that they needed lanterns to be able to walk about during the day: in fact there was such an agglomeration of dust clouds that the light of the sun could not reach them. Also, people in Zabīd heard a terrible noise coming from the sea. This happened either in the year 600 or in 599: because I only recorded the events much later, in 627, instead of when they actually happened, I am not too sure about the exact date. But everyone experienced these events, both in the Ḥijāz and in the Yemen. And during that same year we also witnessed other amazing things. It was in that year that the plague struck the inhabitants of Ṭā'if—so completely that nobody was spared. It lasted from the start of the month of Rajab through to the start of the month of Ramaḍān, 599: in this case I have no doubt whatever about the dates.[124] This plague that swept down on them was of such a kind that when the first symptoms appeared either the patient died within five days or, after the five days had elapsed, his life was spared. At that time Mecca was filled with people from Ṭā'if who had abandoned their homes without even closing the doors, leaving their possessions and livestock in the fields . . ..'

122. Ibid., p.32. Cf. also *Shadharāt*, IV, p.338; Dhahabī, *Kitāb duwal al-islām*, French trans. by A.Nègre, I.F.D., 1979, p.186.

123. *Fut.*, II, p.450.

124. As we have seen, Ibn ʿArabī had been in Ṭā'if one month earlier.

9. 'Counsel My Servants'

In a passage in the 'Book of Visions'[1] Ibn ʿArabī admits that, one evening at Mecca, he experienced a brief spell of despondency in face of the weakness of his disciples and felt like leaving them so that he could concern himself with himself alone. 'When I realised that those who [truly] enter the Path are rare indeed, I lost courage and decided to devote my efforts in future to myself alone and abandon men to their fate . . ..' The temptation was selfish but also human, and yet he did not yield to it. That same night he saw himself in a dream facing God on the Day of Judgement. 'I was standing in front of my Lord, head lowered and fearing that He would punish me for my negligence (*tafrīṭī*). But He said to me: "Servant of Mine, fear nothing! All I ask of you is that you counsel My servants." After being given this vision I taught men, pointing out to them the plain way and the dangers to be feared, addressing myself to all—jurists (*fuqahā'*), dervishes (*fuqarā'*), Sufis and simple believers.' In accordance with the famous *ḥadīth*[2] that 'Religion is good counsel' (*al-naṣīḥa*) in the service of God, His Messenger, the Muslim leaders and the community in general, every Muslim is under an obligation to counsel his neighbour. But, as the Shaikh al-Akbar emphasises on a number of occasions, this obligation was incumbent on him personally in an even more imperative form. 'He [God] addressed Himself specifically to me, without any intermediary, more than once, in Mecca and at Damascus, and in the course of various visions told me: "Counsel My servants!" This obligation is accordingly incumbent upon me more than upon anyone else.'[3] The first vision, the one at Mecca, must have occurred in 600/1204 at the latest because in the very first line of the *Rūḥ al-quds*, which was written during that year, Ibn ʿArabī refers to this same privileged task entrusted to him by God.

Whatever the precise chronological details, through these texts we are

1. *Kitāb al-mubashshirāt*, MS. Fatih 5322, f° 91.
2. Bukhārī, *īmān*, 42.
3. *Fut.*, I, p.658; II, p.273; *Dīwān*, p.352.

given an insight into an entirely different dimension of the mission entrusted to the Seal of the Saints. His task is not just to preserve the heritage of spiritual sciences passed on from the Prophet to this heir of his *par excellence*: that is a deposition (*amāna*) which by its very nature is destined only for the élite of the community, namely the *awliyā'* or saints. In a more general sense—and in conformity with the example set by the Prophet, who was sent to *all* men[4]—his task also involves giving guidance to all beings regardless of whether they are kings, jurists, gnostics or simple believers. It is important to note that this universal nature of Ibn ʿArabī's function is often ignored by his western interpreters, even though it is fundamental to the task as he himself perceived it. Although certain aspects of his teaching were (and are) only destined for and accessible to an intellectual and spiritual élite, his message was addressed to the *umma* or religious community as a whole—either directly or through the intermediary of that élite. This doubtless helps to explain the obvious variations in style and language between Ibn ʿArabī's different writings. It also helps to explain why both while he was still alive and during the first few decades after his death the circulation of some of these works was deliberately restricted to such an extent that, according to Dhahabī, only at the start of the eighth century did the *ʿulamā'* start to become aware of the 'scandalous' nature of his doctrine.

In line with this broader aspect of the task entrusted to the Seal of the Saints, it is easier to understand the apparent change in attitude which led Ibn ʿArabī to visit palaces and rub shoulders with princes when in the East—directly contrary to his line of conduct in the West and also in contradiction of his own advice to disciples. Offering counsel to rulers in line with the *ḥadīth* quoted above and exhorting them to respect the *sharīʿa* is obviously a way of contributing to their salvation; but it is also a way of protecting the community they govern. This would seem to be how we must understand the relationships Ibn ʿArabī established with the Seljuq and Ayyūbid sultans: with Ẓāhir, the king of Aleppo who at his insistence pardoned a traitor, with Ashraf, king of Damascus, to whom he granted an *ijāza* for his works, with ʿAzīz, prince of Banyās,[5] for whom he composed a poem on the occasion of his death,[6] with Kaykā'ūs, the sultan of Anatolia, with whom—as we will see in due course—he came to be on very close terms.

On a more general note, from 600/1204 onwards one notices an intensification in Ibn ʿArabī's activities. Between 600 and 617 he kept crossing and then re-crossing Syria, Palestine, Anatolia, Egypt, Iraq and the Ḥijāz. But

4. Qur'ān 7:158.
5. He was one of the sons of King ʿĀdil, and died at Damascus in 630. Cf. *Tarājim*, p.161.
6. *Dīwān*, p.238.

these continual to-ings and fro-ings did not prevent him from adding considerably to his corpus of writings: according to O. Yahia's *Répertoire Général* he produced almost fifty during the period in question.[7] Admittedly the majority of these were only short treatises less than ten pages in length, and as a rule written very rapidly: so, for example, the *Kitāb al-yaqīn* was composed at Hebron in 602 on the afternoon of 14 Shawwāl.[8] However, from the point of view of doctrine and teaching the number of pages is irrelevant. Even a few lines written by the 'Greatest of Shaikhs' often contain references—themselves almost always indirect and allusive—to the principal ideas that govern his thinking: hence the need to be an assiduous reader of the *Futūḥāt*, which is where these ideas are expounded in detail, to be able to make the most of these small treatises and appreciate their true value. This is the case for instance with the *Kitāb al-alif*, the *Kitāb al-bā'* and the *Kitāb al-mīm*, just to cite three examples:[9] here the science of letters along with its metaphysical implications is expounded in a few highly condensed pages. Of the many treatises produced by Ibn ᶜArabī during this period, another three in particular are worth mentioning: the *Kitāb jawāb . . . Tirmidhī*, the *Kitāb al-tajalliyāt* and the *Kitāb al-tanazzulāt al-mawṣiliyya*. The first of these[10] contains Ibn ᶜArabī's first reply to the questionnaire which Tirmidhī had drawn up as a challenge to those who illegitimately lay claim to the rank of *walāya*, sainthood; Ibn ᶜArabī was later to provide a more detailed version of his reply in chapter 73 of the *Futūḥāt*. Then there is the *Kitāb al-tajalliyāt*, or 'Book of Theophanies';[11] the task of deciphering its frequently enigmatic turns of expression is made somewhat easier by Ibn Sawdakīn's *Sharḥ*, which is itself simply a transcription of the verbal commentary Ibn ᶜArabī supplied to this favourite disciple of his. The work combines and intertwines two themes that lie at the very heart of Ibn ᶜArabī's teaching: the theme of *Tawḥīd*, of the secret of the One without a second, and the theme of the theophanies (*tajalliyāt*) that provide the basis for the multiplicity of beings while at the same time managing not to compromise the unity of Being because they are merely manifestations of Himself to Himself. The text is highly allusive and paradoxical; Ibn Sawdakīn tells us that it scandalised a reader whom he had believed to be a friend (*man kuntu aẓunnuhu khalīlan*).[12] It also has the

7. Cf. the chronological table of Ibn ᶜArabī's works in Yahia's *Histoire et classification*, pp.103–6.

8. Ibid., R.G. § 834.

9. The *Kitāb al-alif* and *Kitāb al-mīm* are included in the *Rasā'il*; the *Kitāb al-bā'* was published in Cairo in 1954.

10. R.G. § 177.

11. Published at Hyderabad in 1948, in the *Rasā'il*; O. Yahia has provided a critical edition, accompanied by Ibn Sawdakīn's commentary, in *al-Mashriq*, 1966–67.

12. *Kitāb al-tajalliyāt*, in *al-Mashriq*, 1966, I, p.109.

distinctive feature of on a number of occasions assuming the form of dialogues between the Shaikh al-Akbar and the great Sufis of the past such as Junayd, Sahl al-Tustarī, Ḥallāj, Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī. One could easily dismiss this as pure literary artifice. However, Ibn ᶜArabī himself states that everything he describes *actually happened* (*fī ḥaḍra ḥaqqiyya*), and that if these meetings with dead masters had occurred corporeally in the sense-perceived world he would have had nothing either to add to or to subtract from the discussions he reproduces.[13] As for the *Kitāb al-tanazzulāt al-mawṣiliyya*,[14] its author explains in the preface that he wrote it in an 'enigmatic and symbolic language' so as to 'frustrate and punish the *ᶜulamā' al-rusūm*' or exoteric scholars; according to Ibn ᶜArabī himself the text comprises fifty-four chapters, although strangely Ḥājjī Khalifa counted fifty-five and O. Yahia fifty-three.[15] After nine chapters of introduction, the work is devoted entirely to the esoteric interpretation of the different phases of ablution and prayer, which are correlated with the celestial spheres and with the prophets who dwell in them. Among Ibn ᶜArabī's works as a whole, this one certainly falls into the category of those whose 'inspired' nature is most self-evident. Many of the pages (especially chapters 46 to 54) refer, in a style reminiscent of the *Kitāb al-isrā'*, to Ibn ᶜArabī's own 'Ascension' (*miᶜrāj*).

Faithful to his commitment to guiding humanity Ibn ᶜArabī also enlarged the circle of his disciples—a fact that emerges clearly from analysis of the *samāᶜ*s issued by him during this period. The *samāᶜ*—literally 'hearing'—is one of the chief methods of transmission of knowledge in Islam.[16] It assumes the form of a reading certificate normally placed at the end either of the work as a whole or of each of its chapters and containing the names of the people who were present—either with the author himself or not[17]—at the reading of the document in question; failing this, simply the date and place of the reading session are given. In the case of a writer as prolific as Ibn ᶜArabī these *samāᶜ*s are of inestimable value. On the one hand they enable us to retrace with considerable accuracy the chronology and itinerary of his own movements; on the other hand they help give us some idea—even if incomplete—of the disciples who gathered around him.

In this connection it should be noted that, by way of contrast with the listeners during the 'Syrian period' of 617 to 638 which we will be looking at

13. Ibid., p.112.

14. Published under the title *Laṭā'if al-asrār*, Cairo 1961.

15. O.Yahia, R.G. § 762.

16. Cf. G. Vajda, *La Transmission du savoir en Islam*, ed. N. Cottart, London 1983.

17. In the case of Ibn ᶜArabī's works, the *samāᶜ*s reproduced by O. Yahia in his Répertoire Général were all delivered in the presence of the author himself with the exception of a few certificates for the *Futūḥāt* which were given out by Ibn Sawdakīn after his master's death.

later, none of the fifty or so auditors whose names occur in the *samāᶜ*-s dating from the 'period of wanderings' between 600 and 617 seems to be mentioned by the chroniclers and writers of biographical dictionaries. There would appear to be just two exceptions to this rule: Ibn Sukayna (*d.* 607/1210) and Ismāᶜīl b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Ubbādhī. Ibn Sukayna, whose name appears in a certificate for the *Rūḥ* dated 601, at Baghdad,[18] was a famous Baghdadi *muḥaddith-ṣūfī* who according to Abū Shāma invested the son of Ibn Jawzī (*d.* 597/1201) with the *khirqa* at Ibn Jawzī's request.[19] In his *Ijāza* Ibn ᶜArabī also says of Ibn Sukayna that the benefit derived from their meeting was mutual (*akhadhtu ᶜanhu wa akhadha ᶜannī*);[20] no doubt he was alluding to the *ḥadīths* he in turn received from the man. As for Ismāᶜīl b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Ubbādhī, he belonged to a family that was Andalusian by origin but had come to settle in Syria in 570; according to Ṣafadī (*d.* 764/1362) he was imām of the mosque on the Rock at Jerusalem, which is where he died in 656/1259.[21] However, it is not in Palestine but in Anatolia that we find him appearing at Ibn ᶜArabī's side. In 613 he attended a reading of the *Tāj al-rasā'il* at Malatya,[22] and in 615 a reading of the *Rūḥ al-quds*.[23]

As to those remaining auditors who were denied the distinguished honour of appearing in the collections of *ṭabaqāt*, only from their *nisba* can we learn anything at all about their identity, however vague. For example, half a dozen of them are of Andalusian stock; but it is impossible to tell whether they were travellers from Andalusia who happened to be passing through the East or whether they were émigrés who had already been settlers in this part of the Islamic world for one or more generations. On the other hand we do happen to know that one of them—Mūsā b. Muḥammad al-Qabbāb al-Qurṭubī,[24] a disciple of Ibn Ḥirzihim—was muezzin of the *ḥaram* at Mecca and according to Ibn ᶜArabī had the annoying habit of hoarding food in the Mosque. 'I once found myself beside Mūsā b. Muḥammad al-Qabbāb at the minaret of the *ḥaram* at the Hazūra Gate in Mecca, where he was muezzin. He had some food with him that had an odour which was disagreeable to anyone who happened to smell it. Well, I had heard a tradition which states that the angels are bothered by the same things that bother men and that for this reason it is forbidden to approach a mosque smelling of garlic, onions or leeks.

18. R.G. § 639, *samāᶜ* § 1.

19. *Tarājim*, p.70, where Abū Shāma records that Ibn Dubaythī (*d.* 637/1239) classed Ibn Sukayna among the *abdāl*. Cf. also *Shadharāt*, V, p.25.

20. *Ijāza*, p.177. Cf. also *Fut.*, IV, p.529; *Kitāb al-ᶜabādila*, Cairo 1969, p.172.

21. *Wāfī*, IX, pp.211–2.

22. R.G. § 736, *samāᶜ* § 2.

23. R.G. § 639, *samāᶜ* § 3; Ibn ᶜArabī also refers to him in *Fut.*, III, p.49.

24. R.G. § 639, *samāᶜ* § 4; cf. also *Fut.*, I, p.603; II, p.262; IV, pp.96, 529.

I went to bed determined to tell the man the following day to remove the food from the Mosque for the sake of the angels. But I saw God in my sleep, and He said to me: "Don't speak to him about the food, because his odour is not the same for Us as it is for you". The next morning the man came to see me, as was his custom, and I told him what had happened. He burst into tears, prostrated himself in gratitude to God, and said to me: "In spite of that, it is preferable to observe the law". As a result he removed the food from the Mosque.'[25]

As a rule the other hearers were natives of the town, or at any rate the region, in which the reading session took place. So, the *samāᶜ*s delivered in Mosul include several *'mawṣilī' nisbas*, as in the case of Aḥmad b. Masᶜūd al-Muqri' al-Mawṣilī: his name occurs in a certificate for the *Rūḥ* dated Mosul, 601,[26] and Ibn ᶜArabī refers to him on a number of occasions in his *Muḥāḍarat al-abrār* in connection with *ḥadīths* and *akhbār* that he received from him.[27] Some certificates for the *Futūḥāt* also reveal that Aḥmad Mawṣilī's two daughters Umm Dalāl and Umm Raslān attended the reading of several chapters from the work at Damascus in 636 and again in 637.[28]

On the whole it would seem to have been a simple consequence of the particular routes travelled which, in a sense accidentally, brought most of the hearers mentioned in the *samāᶜ*s issued between 600 and 617 into contact with the Shaikh al-Akbar for a period of time; some of them were travellers whose own path happened to cross Ibn ᶜArabī's, others were from the local population and took advantage of the master passing through their region to benefit from his teaching. It is interesting to note that, for very obvious reasons, during this period of incessant travelling the names of almost all the hearers only appear once; only from 617 onwards, after the shaikh had begun to put down roots in Syria, did a group of regular listeners start to form. A few odd exceptions only serve to confirm the rule. There is of course Ḥabashī, Ibn ᶜArabī's companion of long standing, but also Ismāᶜīl b. Sawdakīn:[29] his name appears in most of the *samāᶜ*s for the period. A reading certificate for the *Rūḥ al-quds*[30] establishes that he was together with the Shaikh al-Akbar in Cairo in the year 603/1206. In 611/1214, at Aleppo, he

25. *Fut.*, I, p.603.

26. R.G. § 639, *samāᶜ* § 7.

27. *Muḥāḍarat*, I, p.237; II, pp.240, 259. Cf. also *Fut.*, IV, p.490, where Aḥmad al-Mawṣilī describes to him a vision in which he questioned the Prophet regarding the lawfulness of chess, singing and so forth.

28. R.G. § 135, *samāᶜ*s §§ 21, 29, 34, 38, 44.

29. For Ismāᶜīl b. Sawdakīn cf. *Shadharāt*, V, p.223; Ibn al-Sābūnī (*d.* 680/1283), *Takmila akmal al-akmal*, Baghdad 1957, pp.73–4; Kaḥḥāla, *Muᶜjam al-muᶜallifīn*, II, p.271.

30. Cf. O. Yahia, R.G. § 639, *samāᶜ* § 9.

persuaded him to write a commentary on the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*,[31] a collection of esoteric poems branded by spiteful jurists as erotic poetry. The tenor of the *Kitāb wasā'il al-sā'il*—a small treatise in which he piously copied out his teacher's answers to his questions along with pieces of advice and other confidential matters—together with some verses in Ibn ʿArabī's own *Dīwān* which are dedicated to Ismāʿīl,[32] are more than adequate testimony both to the master's profound affection for him and to the intellectual collaboration established between them. With the death of Ibn ʿArabī in 638/1240 this collaboration did not really come to an end, because out of all his disciples it was Ismāʿīl who continued to issue reading certificates, or *samāʿ*s, for the *Futūḥāt*.[33] We are also indebted to him for a number of commentaries on Ibn ʿArabī's works—in particular for his commentary on the *Kitāb al-tajalliyāt*.[34] It must be emphasised here that, apart from Qūnawī who was an especially prolific author, Ibn Sawdakīn was one of the rare direct disciples of Ibn ʿArabī who transmitted his teaching by writing.

One also notes the presence of two other regular listeners: Muḥammad b. Saʿd al-Dīn b. Barangush Ibn Qamar al-Dimashqī and Isḥāq b. Yūsuf al-Rūmī. The first of these two men, in all probability a native of Damascus, seems only to have started associating with the Shaikh al-Akbar in 615/1218: at any rate that is when his name makes its first appearance, in a *samāʿ* for the *Rūḥ* issued at Malatya.[35] From Anatolia he must have accompanied Ibn ʿArabī to Syria, because he is mentioned again in certificates issued by him in 617[36] and 618[37] at Aleppo, and in 630[38] and 633[39] at Damascus. All in all the name of this assiduous disciple occurs in thirty-five *samāʿ*s, twenty-seven of them for the *Futūḥāt*. This perseverance is not really surprising when

31. His request was seconded by Ḥabashī: cf. *Dhakhā'ir al-aʿlāq*, Cairo 1968, p.4.

32. *Dīwān*, pp.91, 181. Cf. also *Fut.*, II, p.681, where Ibn ʿArabī calls him 'the gnostic' and a 'child most dear' (*al-ʿārif al-walad al-ʿazīz*). It will also be remembered that he composed specifically for Ismāʿīl a treatise entitled *Jawāb su'āl Ismāʿīl b. Sawdakīn*; this was published in *Rasā'il*, Hyderabad 1948, and has been translated into French by Michel Vâlsan in *Études traditionnelles*, June 1952, pp.182–8.

33. O. Yahia, R.G. § 135.

34. The *Kitāb al-tajalliyāt* (R.G. § 738) was published in the 1948 Hyderabad edition of *Rasā'il*, and re-edited along with Ibn Sawdakīn's valuable commentary by O. Yahia in *al-Mashriq*, 1967–8. Ibn Sawdakīn also wrote commentaries on the *Kitāb mashāhid al-asrār* (R.G. § 432), the *Kitāb al-isrā'* (R.G. § 313) and on another work which appears to have been lost, called the *Kitāb lawāqiḥ al-anwār* (R.G. § 638a).

35. R.G. § 639, *samāʿ* § 3.

36. R.G. § 70, *samāʿ* § 1.

37. R.G. § 412, *samāʿ* § 1.

38. R.G. § 484, *samāʿ* § 1.

39. R.G. § 67, *samāʿ* § 2; R.G. § 414, *samāʿ* § 3; R.G. § 736, *samāʿ* § 3, and the 27 *samāʿ*s for the *Futūḥāt* (R.G. § 135).

one considers that Ibn Qamar was Ibn ʿArabī's son-in-law. That is what we learn from a short passage in a still unpublished text called the *Kitāb natā'ij al-adhkār*, where Ibn ʿArabī refers to him as '*ṣihrī*' and specifies that on 25 Shaʿbān 631 the man attained a very exalted station.[40]

As for Majd al-Dīn Isḥāq b. Yūsuf al-Rūmī, it is no exaggeration to say that his meeting with the Shaikh al-Akbar—a meeting which, as we saw earlier, Ibn ʿArabī had been notified of in advance by his vision at Algeciras in 589—marked a decisive turning-point in the history of Iranian Sufism, both Shīʿite and non-Shīʿite. To be more specific Majd al-Dīn was the father of Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, the disciple of Ibn ʿArabī who was to play a fundamental role in the spread and expansion of his school in the eastern part of the Islamic world. In other words the various aspects and consequences of the friendship struck up in Mecca between Majd al-Dīn, an Iranian, and Ibn ʿArabī, an Andalusian, were to assume a very special significance.

Apparently the only source that tells us anything about Majd al-Dīn Isḥāq al-Rūmī is Ibn Bībī's history of the Seljuq dynasty of Rūm; called '*al-Awāmir al-ʿalā'iyya fī l-umūr al-ʿalā'iyya*', the first draft of this work was completed in 680/1281.[41] From the various passages referring to him two general conclusions emerge. First, Majd al-Dīn's contemporaries seem to have considered him a man of great piety and a spiritual guide. That at least is the implication of the honorific titles bestowed on him by Ibn Bībī, such as 'model of devotees' and 'glory of the Pillars' (*sharaf al-awtād*)—the term 'Pillar' (*watad* in the singular) designating one of the highest functions in the hierarchy of initiation. But there is also the testimony of Caliph al-Nāṣir himself, who in a letter to Kaykā'ūs refers to him as 'support of the gnostics' (*ʿumdat al-ʿārifīn*).[42] Secondly, the passages in question portray Majd al-Dīn as a high dignitary in the Seljuq kingdom of Anatolia, a person very close to Kaykhusraw and to his son and successor Kaykā'ūs. For example, in one passage we are told that King Kaykhusraw wrote him a long poem after he had emigrated to Syria for reasons of political opportuneness,[43] inviting him to return to his native country, and that when he did arrive in Malatya he was given a royal welcome.[44] The historian ends his account by comparing

40. *Kitāb natā'ij al-adhkār*, MS. Fatih 5322, ff^{os} 54b-55.

41. *EI*^{2} s.v. Ibn Bībī; I have used the abridged edition of the *Awāmir* published at Ankara in 1956. The passages referring to Qūnawī's father are on pages 91–3 and 155–58.

42. *Awāmir*, p.157.

43. Ibn Bībī specifies that Majd al-Dīn left the *bilād al-Rūm* during the period when Kaykhusraw was experiencing difficulties. Kaykhusraw had succeeded to his father in 588/1192, but his rule only became authoritative after the death of his rival Rukn al-Dīn in 600/1204. Cf. *EI*^{2} s.v. Kaykhusraw.

44. *Awāmir*, pp.91–3.

the friendship between the king and Majd al-Dīn to Ḥallāj's 'I am He Whom I love and He Whom I love is I'.[45] However, for more specific information about the role played by Qūnawī's father in Seljuq political life we need to turn to the section of the *Awāmir* which deals with the reign of Kaykā'ūs: to a passage that also happens to be a valuable document for the study of Nāṣirean *futuwwa*, because that in essence is what it is about. In this passage our historian relates how, after King Kaykā'ūs had won his victory over the emperor of Trabzon at Sinop (611/1214), he sent a mission to Baghdad requesting the *futuwwa* investiture from the caliph.[46] Of all the dignitaries in the realm it was Majd al-Dīn who was chosen by the sultan to bring the diplomatic mission to a successful conclusion. Nāṣir, ever eager to extend the ramifications of his order, willingly granted Kaykā'ūs' request and handed over to Majd al-Dīn the 'trousers of the *futuwwa*' along with a letter of investiture (*kitāb futuwwa*). After reproducing the text of the letter Ibn Bībī adds one further piece of information. To reward Majd al-Dīn for his efforts Kaykā'ūs entrusted him with responsibility for initiating into the *futuwwa* those whom he considered worthy, and on Majd al-Dīn's death he passed the responsibility on to his son Muḥammad—that is, Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī.

Majd al-Dīn made the Shaikh al-Akbar's acquaintance in the year 600/1204, while staying in the holy places.[47] It should be added that this stay of his in the Ḥijāz very probably marked the final period of his 'political exile': it was only from 600–1 onwards, after Rukn al-Dīn's death, that Kaykhusraw's real reign over the *bilād al-Rūm*—Anatolia—began, and this will certainly have been the period when he sent Majd al-Dīn the famous message inviting him to return to Anatolia.[48] Accepting the invitation, Majd al-Dīn apparently persuaded Ibn ʿArabī to accompany him to the *bilād al-Rūm*. From the Ḥijāz they made for Iraq, where they arrived together in 601 and stayed for a while first in Baghdad,[49] then at Mosul.[50] Although from this time onwards we find no further mention of Majd al-Dīn in the reading certificates for Ibn ʿArabī's works, we do happen to know that Ibn ʿArabī himself stayed in Konya in 602/1205 and wrote a number of treatises there, including the

45. Ibid. In other words Majd al-Dīn and Kaykhusraw were as close to each other as Ḥallāj in this famous verse of his claimed he was to God.

46. *Awāmir*, pp.155–58. It should be noted that there is a chronological inconsistency in Ibn Bībī's account: at the end of the passage he states that the diplomatic mission was dispatched in 608, but the battle of Sinop was only fought in 611/1214 (cf. *EI*² s.v. Anatolia).

47. This we learn from *samāʿ* § 1 for the *Tāj al-rasāʾil* (R.G. § 736), dated 24 Dhū l-Qaʿda 600 at Mecca, and from *samāʿ* § 4 for the *Rūḥ* (R.G. § 639), also dated 600 at Mecca.

48. Cf. *EI*² s.v. Kaykhusraw.

49. R.G. § 639, *samāʿ* § 5.

50. R.G. § 639, *samāʿ* § 7.

Risālat al-anwār.[51] Qūnawī's father was reinstated in his position and function at the Seljuq court, but Ibn ʿArabī soon left Asia Minor to resume his wanderings. However, his travels did bring him back to Anatolia, first in around 608–9,[52] and again a few years later in 612, although on that occasion he stayed until 615 at the very least, possibly even until 618.[53] There would seem to have been two reasons for this prolonged stay of his in Anatolia: his friendship with King Kaykā'ūs and his new domestic responsibilities. Everything tends to suggest that on Majd al-Dīn's death Ibn ʿArabī married his widow, who was by then the mother of the still very young Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī; at any rate we are told that this is what happened by a number of Arab and Persian biographers. But it should be noted that as of yet not one reference to the event has been found in Ibn ʿArabī's writings or in the writings either of Qūnawī himself or of his direct disciple, Jandī. On the other hand, the marriage is mentioned in the *Manāqib Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī*—a Persian text which, according to its editor, Professor Foruzanfar,[54] was written in the seventh century of the Hegira and consequently either while Qūnawī was still alive (he died in 673/1274) or very shortly after his death. The anonymous author of this work describes the marriage in the following terms. 'Muḥyī l-Dīn was in Egypt when he heard that Shaikh Kirmānī had arrived . . .. At that time the mother of Shaikh Ṣadr al-Dīn [Qūnawī], who had been the wife of Majd al-Dīn Isḥāq, the sultan's master, was married to Shaikh Ibn ʿArabī, and Shaikh Ṣadr al-Dīn was attached to his service . . ..'[55] We also find three references to the marriage in al-Qārī al-Baghdādī's *Manāqib Ibn ʿArabī*;[56] one of them is a quotation from Yāfiʿī, a Yemenite author who died a hundred and thirty years after Ibn ʿArabī in 768 and may have been acquainted with first-generation disciples of his. And finally a much later hagiographical writer, Jāmī (*d.* 898/1492), records in his *Nafaḥāt al-uns* that 'when he [i.e. Ibn ʿArabī] arrived in Konya after the birth of Qūnawī and after the death of Qūnawī's father, he married Qūnawī's

51. R.G. §§ 28, 33, 70. Cf. also *Kitāb al-amr*, trans. Asín Palacios in *Islam cristianizado*, p.310, where Ibn ʿArabī mentions his encounter with Shaikh Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī at Konya in 602; there will be more to say about the meeting later. Ibn ʿArabī also refers to Qūnawī's father elsewhere, in *Muḥādarat*, I, pp.165 and 180.

52. This is the implication of a passage in the *Futūḥāt* (IV, p.547) where Ibn ʿArabī alludes to his correspondence with Kaykā'ūs; but it is impossible to be certain about the matter.

53. A considerable number of *samāʿ*s establish that in 612, 613, 614 and 615 Ibn ʿArabī was in Malatya; cf. the chronological table in Appendix 1. We also happen to know that he attended the burial of Ḥabashī, who died at Malatya in around 617–18. Cf. *Durra*, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.158–9.

54. *Manāqib Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī*, ed. Foruzanfar, Tehran 1347/1969, introduction.

55. *Manāqib . . . Kirmānī*, p.84.

56. *Manāqib Ibn ʿArabī*, pp.25, 35, 38.

mother and the boy himself was brought up in the service and in the company of the Shaikh'.[57] In the light of these various texts Ibn ʿArabī's marriage to Majd al-Dīn's widow seems more than probable. Perhaps we should also add to the dossier a passage from the *Nafḥ al-ṭīb* where Maqqarī asserts that one of Ibn ʿArabī's sons, Muḥammad Saʿd al-Dīn, was born at Malatya in 618:[58] very probably the son in question was an offspring from the same marriage. However, this does not help us determine when the marriage alliance was actually formed. We do not know the year of Majd al-Dīn's death; what we do know is that he was still alive in 611/1214 and that his son Ṣadr al-Dīn was born some time between 607 and 612.[59] It is therefore probable—although this remains no more than a conjecture—that the marriage took place some time between 612 and 618, during Ibn ʿArabī's final and lengthy stay in Asia Minor.

Whatever the exact dates, only a few years separated Ibn ʿArabī's departure from Anatolia (which cannot have been any earlier than 615) from the time when the young Ṣadr al-Dīn found himself together with him in Egypt. Ibn ʿArabī must have made the journey to Egypt, which is mentioned in the *Manāqib . . . Kirmānī* referred to above, by 620/1223 at the latest, because it was during that year that he settled permanently in Syria; at the time Qūnawī will have been no more than around twelve years old at the very most. The same document[60] also reveals that during this period Ibn ʿArabī made the decision to entrust the responsibility for Ṣadr al-Dīn's education to Shaikh Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī. 'Shaikh Kirmānī stayed for a while in Egypt. He and Ibn ʿArabī used to meet and see each other constantly. Shaikh Kirmānī wanted to go to the Ḥijāz. After his intention had been confirmed, and he had started making preparations for the journey and his project was taking form, Shaikh Muḥyī l-Dīn took Shaikh Ṣadr al-Dīn along with him and went to Shaikh Kirmānī. He said to him: "You know the goodwill and affection I feel for Ṣadr al-Dīn. He is like a real son to me. What am I saying? He is far dearer to me than a son by the flesh (*farzand-e ṣolbī*). We are linked to each other by various kinds of kinship—first he was a child (*farzand*), then a disciple (*murīd*), then a student (*shāgard*)—and by a

57. *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, 1337 edition, p.556.

58. *Nafḥ*, II, p.170.

59. Prof. Foruzanfar gives around 612 as the date of Qūnawī's birth (cf. *Manāqib . . . Kirmānī*, p.81) on the basis of a remark by Ṣafadī (*Wāfī*, II, p.200) to the effect that Qūnawī was '32 years old' when he died in 673; Foruzanfar justifiably assumes a slip of the pen and reads '62 years old' (but why not 72?). Ruspoli on the other hand, in his critical edition of Qūnawī's *Miftāḥ al-ghayb* entitled *La Clé du monde suprasensible*, states that Qūnawī was born in 607; as we will see, this is more likely to be the correct date.

60. *Manāqib . . . Kirmānī*, p.85.

companionship which has spanned several years.[61] I have fulfilled all the proper duties of a father towards his son, of a master towards his disciple, and of a teacher towards his student, and [I have obtained for him] the fruit of companionship and of understanding of such a kind that no further obstacles remain. I have adorned his outer being with knowledge and with virtue; as for his inner being—that is, as regards the secrets of Reality and the method of following the Way—that also has been well and truly accomplished thanks to guidance and good direction. God has transmitted the fulfilment of these things to you, and it now depends on your consideration and response to the matter." Shaikh Kirmānī responded favourably and accepted Shaikh Muḥyī l-Dīn's request. Accordingly Shaikh Muḥyī l-Dīn confided Ṣadr al-Dīn to Shaikh Kirmānī's charge.'

Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī was, as his name indicates, a native of Kermān; via his master Rukn al-Dīn Sijāssī he was affiliated with the school of Aḥmad Ghazālī.[62] Like Aḥmad Ghazālī himself he had a pronounced taste for *samāʿ* or musical recital, and for the practice of *shāhid bāzī*, the contemplation of beautiful young men, which brought down upon him the criticism of several Sufis including Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī, the famous master of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī.[63] Ibn ʿArabī—normally so reserved about these practices, as we saw earlier—seems not to have held them against him: if he had, he would certainly not have entrusted him with bringing up the boy who in his eyes was 'dearer than a real son'. Doubtless he, like Jāmī,[64] considered that in the case of Awḥad al-Dīn it was a question of a genuine mode of spiritual realisation. According to the *Kitāb al-amr*,[65] Ibn ʿArabī became friends with Kirmānī in 602/1205 at Konya. Subsequently their paths were to cross frequently, because the anecdotes recorded in the *Manāqib . . . Kirmānī* show them together in both Egypt and Syria.[66] One of these anecdotes goes to some length to describe the affection they had for each other. 'The union, affection,

61. This passage suggests that Ṣadr al-Dīn was already a teenager at the time. If he had been born in 612 he would have been only 8 years old in 620. This would seem to make it preferable to hold to 607 as the date of Qūnawī's birth—unless, that is, we are to suppose contrary to all the evidence that Ibn ʿArabī travelled outside of Syria between 620 and his death in 638.

62. For Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī cf. *EI*² s.v. Kirmānī, and *Heart's Witness: The Sufi Quatrains of Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī*, ed. and trans. Bernd Manuel Weiseher and Peter Lamborn Wilson, introduction, pp.1–10.

63. *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, pp.589–90.

64. *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, pp.590–91.

65. I have not been able to consult the complete edition of the *Kitāb al-amr* which was published in Beirut in 1912, and the version of the text given at the end of the *Dhakhā'ir al-aʿlāq*, Cairo 1968, is incomplete; but the passage in question is translated by Asín Palacios in *Islam cristianizado*, p.310.

66. *Manāqib . . . Kirmānī*, p.85 (Egypt); ibid., pp.85–6 (Syria).

love and friendship between Kirmānī and Ibn ᶜArabī were so great that one day in Damascus Shaikh Kirmānī asked Shaikh Muḥyī l-Dīn: "I don't see you in your usual state, and get the impression that you are troubled and anxious. What's the reason?" Shaikh Muḥyī l-Dīn replied: "Nothing is hidden from the shaikh; thanks to his inner light and perfect knowledge he can discover the reason". Thereupon Shaikh Kirmānī concentrated for a moment, performed an *istikhāra* [the traditional ritual for 'asking counsel'] and became aware of the cause. "Shaikh Muḥyī l-Dīn is bothered because he has left some of his books in Malatya!" Shaikh Muḥyī l-Dīn said to him: "We have believed and recognised the truth (*āmannā wa ṣaddaqnā*). It is just as you say!" . . . And in spite of Shaikh Muḥyī l-Dīn's protests, Shaikh Kirmānī went from Damascus to Malatya, took all the books and returned.' For his own part, in his chapter on 'the Earth of Reality' in the *Futūḥāt* Ibn ᶜArabī describes a very peculiar incident in the life of the young Kirmānī.[67] Apart from the *Manāqib . . . Kirmānī*, a number of documents attest to Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī's link (using this word in the technical sense it has in Sufism) with Shaikh Kirmānī. Firstly there is Ṣadr al-Dīn's own will and testament, in which he advises his disciples to 'lay out Shaikh Awḥad al-Dīn's prayer rug in my tomb'.[68] Secondly, in a manuscript letter addressed to a disciple Qūnawī states that Awḥad al-Dīn had been his master 'in certain respects, and for two years at Shiraz I was his companion and in his service'.[69] Finally, the relationship is confirmed in the *silsila qāsimiyya* preserved in Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī's *ᶜIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn*.[70]

We are already in a position to understand why it is that Qūnawī was destined to play a crucial role as a 'crossroads' in the transmission of Ibn ᶜArabī's teaching to Shīᶜite Gnosis. He was in fact the recipient of a double spiritual inheritance—Arab from Ibn ᶜArabī, Iranian from Awḥad al-Dīn—which predisposed him to become the pivot or link between these two aspects of Islamic esotericism. He himself used often to say, 'I have tasted milk from the breasts of two mothers!'[71] On top of the influence from Kirmānī he was also influenced by other Iranian Sufis—in particular by Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (*d.* 672/1273), with whom according to a number of sources Qūnawī had very

67. *Fut.*, I, p.127, trans. by Henry Corbin in *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, p.140.

68. W. Chittick, 'The Last Will and Testament of Ibn ᶜArabī's foremost disciple', *Sophia Perennis* IV. i, p.53.

69. Personal communication from W. Chittick.

70. Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (*d.* 1790), an Indian, wrote the *Tāj al-ᶜarūs* and a famous commentary on the *Iḥyā' ᶜulūm al-dīn*. He also wrote two treatises—the *ᶜIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn* and *Itḥāf al-asfiyā'*—consisting simply of lists of *silsilas*. See the *silsilas* reproduced below in Appendix 5.

71. *Manāqib . . . Kirmānī*, p.87.

close links.[72] Henry Corbin seems to have been one of the first scholars to appreciate the full significance of this relationship: 'This friendship is in itself a factor of primordial significance, because it makes Ṣadr al-Dīn the bridging link between the Shaikh al-Akbar and the author of the immense *Mathnawī* . . .. At first sight Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's teaching and Ibn ᶜArabī's would appear to reflect and express two different forms of spirituality . . .. And yet to remain content to emphasise the contrast between the form of Mawlānā's spirituality and the form assumed by the spirituality of Ibn ᶜArabī would be to stay on a totally superficial level of perception. It is the same sense of theophany which inspires them both, the same nostalgia for beauty, the same revelation of love'.[73] We also happen to know that Ṣadr al-Dīn was in contact with two disciples of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (*d.* 618/1221)—Saᶜd al-Dīn b. Ḥamawayh (*d.* 650/1252) whom he spent time with in Aleppo[74] and Najm al-Dīn Rāzī whom he met in Konya[75]—and that he maintained a correspondence with the philosopher Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (*d.* 672/1273).[76] But, granted the significance of these contacts and connections, it must be said that Mawlānā's or Kirmānī's influence on Qūnawī's development and intellectual growth were far less decisive than the influence exerted on him by the Shaikh al-Akbar. Whether or not he actually was his stepson is a matter which ultimately is of very little importance. There can be no denying that at the very least they were extremely close to each other, and that their mutual affection was immense: Ibn ᶜArabī declared as much in his words to Shaikh Kirmānī, and demonstrated it by dedicating the second draft of the *Futūḥāt* to Qūnawī[77] (the first version he had dedicated to his eldest son). As for Qūnawī, he expresses his own affection on a number of occasions *in* his writings[78] but even more so *through* his writings as a whole. 'The Shaikh's [i.e. Ibn ᶜArabī's] intention with regard to the question of *waḥdat al-wujūd* can only be grasped in a way that harmonises with reason (*ᶜaql*) and with law (*sharᶜ*) through the study of Ṣadr al-Dīn's works and through understanding them as they should

72. *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, p.557; Aflākī, *Manāqib al-ᶜārifīn*, French trans. by C. Huart, *Les Saints des Derviches tourneurs*, Paris 1978, pp.249, 271, 272, 281, 282, 291, 307, 308, etc., and II, p.97, where Rūmī recommends that Qūnawī be chosen to perform the prayer for the dead over him.

73. *L'Imagination créatrice*, p.61 (English trans., *Creative Imagination*, p.70).

74. Cf. e.g. Jandī, *Sharḥ al-fuṣūṣ*, pp.107–8; Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, p.429.

75. *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, p.435.

76. W. Chittick, 'Mysticism versus Philosophy in earlier Islamic History: the al-Ṭūsī, al-Qūnawī correspondence', *Religious Studies*, Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp.87–104.

77. *Histoire et classification*, p.202.

78. In this respect his treatise entitled *al-Nafaḥāt al-ilāhiyya* is a document of special value because it is the only one of Qūnawī's writings in which he describes his own spiritual experiences and his 'posthumous' relationship with the Shaikh al-Akbar. There will be more to say about it later.

be understood.'[79] This statement by Jāmī—himself a commentator on Ibn ʿArabī—shows quite clearly Qūnawī's importance as an interpreter of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine.[80] In fact, regardless of whether or not they are actually written in the form of commentaries on Ibn ʿArabī's works, all of Qūnawī's writings serve to clarify and add definition to the governing ideas in Ibn ʿArabī's teaching. This had the effect of ensuring that his works made an indelible imprint on the subsequent development of Ibn ʿArabī's school as a whole—to such an extent that there is no exaggeration in saying that 'in the Eastern lands of Islam . . . the influence of Qūnawī through his own writings and those of his immediate students has been such that Ibn ʿArabī has always been seen through his eyes'.[81] Not only did Ṣadr al-Dīn give Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine a precise form and outline but he also gave it a name: *waḥdat al-wujūd*, 'Oneness of Being'. This expression has the definite merit of offering a simple and handy designation for Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine; but it is also highly reductive, and provided Ibn ʿArabī's critics with a dangerous weapon. In more general terms, by systematising Ibn ʿArabī's thought Qūnawī made it more vulnerable to the attacks of the exotericists, the *ahl al-rusūm*. Out of all of Qūnawī's works—approximately twenty-five in number according to W. Chittick[82]—the *Miftāḥ al-ghayb* and *Iʿjāz al-bayān* were doubtless the most read and the most studied. The *Miftāḥ al-ghayb*, which has been available for several years now in a critical edition,[83] deals with the kind of metaphysical problems expounded by the Shaikh al-Akbar, whereas the *Iʿjāz al-bayān*, which has been published twice,[84] consists of an original commentary on the sura *al-Fātiḥa*. But there is one other treatise by Qūnawī that deserves a critical edition in the near future: the *Nafaḥāt ilāhiyya*, about which Jāmī said, 'Tell whoever wishes to learn of Qūnawī's perfection in this Way that he should read his *Nafaḥāt ilāhiyya*, because in this work he has recorded many of his states, ecstasies, unveilings and revelations'.[85] On reading this work[86]

79. *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, p.556.

80. Apart from the thesis by Ruspoli (*La Clé du monde suprasensible*, Paris IV, 1978) the only work done on Qūnawī has been by W. Chittick. To the two articles by him referred to above the following should be added: 'Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī on the Oneness of Being', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, New York–Namur 1981, II, pp.171–84, and 'The Five Divine Presences: from al-Qūnawī to al-Qayṣarī', *Muslim World*, Hartford 1982, LXXII.2, pp.107–28.

81. W. Chittick, 'Last Will and Testament', p.43.

82. Ibid., p.47.

83. Ruspoli, *La Clé du monde suprasensible*. It must however be added that, 'critical' or not, the edition leaves much to be desired, and that the accompanying translation requires thorough revision.

84. At Hyderabad in 1949 and at Cairo in 1969.

85. *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, p.556.

86. It was published at Tehran in 1416/1898, but I have consulted the manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale, MS. 1354, ff^{os} 3–138.

one discovers that after the death of his master Ṣadr al-Dīn stayed in regular contact with the principal members of Ibn ʿArabī's circle. For example, it contains the text of letters he wrote to the *qāḍī* Ibn Zakī (the 'protector' and host of Ibn ʿArabī at Damascus), and to Ibn ʿArabī's sons Saʿd al-Dīn (in one of them he complains at receiving no news from him 'even though I see you wherever you are') and ʿImād al-Dīn.

But it was perhaps chiefly through the intermediary of his Iranian disciples who studied the works of Ibn ʿArabī under his direction that Ṣadr al-Dīn contributed to the propagation of Ibn ʿArabī's ideas in Iran and Turkey. In this respect three of his disciples in particular played a considerable role: Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī (*d.* 688/1289),[87] author of the famous *Lamaʿāt* or *'Divine Flashes'* which were inspired by his study of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*; Saʿd al-Dīn Farghānī (*d.* 700/1300),[88] who produced a commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Tāʾiyyat al-kubrā*; and Mu'ayyad al-Dīn Jandī (*d.* 700/1300),[89] author of a major commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* which was to provide much of the inspiration for subsequent commentators such as Qāshānī (*d.* 730/1329) and his disciple Qayṣarī (*d.* 761/1359). And yet to see in Qūnawī nothing but a theoretician and more or less faithful interpreter of Ibn ʿArabī's teaching would be a mistake. He was also a spiritual master, an 'Akbarian heir' (*wārith akbarī*) and, as such, a transmitter of the *rūḥāniyya* or spiritual influence of the Shaikh al-Akbar. Here too, examination of the 'chains' or *silsilas* reveals the central place he occupied in the transmission of the *khirqa akbariyya*.[90]

It will now be clear why the friendship between the Shaikh al-Akbar and Qūnawī's father, and their companionship in Anatolia, were in the long term to have decisive implications for the general orientation of Ibn ʿArabī's school and for the growth of Sufism in the eastern parts of the Islamic world. But in the short term they were also to have repercussions on Seljuq politics in Anatolia. We have on this point the specific testimony of Ibn ʿArabī himself, who on a number of occasions in his writings mentions his contacts with King Kaykāʾūs (*d.* 615/1218).[91] The only information about this relationship preserved by the chroniclers is an anecdote to the effect that the Seljuq sultan made a gift of a house to Ibn ʿArabī, who subsequently gave it in alms to a

87. For ʿIrāqī cf. *EI*^{2} s.v. ʿIrāqī; Saʿīd Nafīsī, *Taʾrīkh-e naẓm o nasr dar īrān*, Tehran 1345/1965, I, pp.164ff, and *Kulliyyāt-i shaykh Fakhr al-Dīn . . . ʿIrāqī*, Tehran 1335; Fakhruddin ʿIrāqī, *Divine Flashes*, trans. and with an introduction by W. Chittick and P. Lamborn Wilson, New York, 1982.

88. For Farghānī cf. Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ naqsh al-fuṣūṣ*, critical edition by W. Chittick, Tehran 1977, esp. the introduction by Prof. Ashtiyānī, p.35; *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, pp.559–61.

89. For Jandī see Prof. Ashtiyānī's introduction to the edition of the *Sharḥ al-fuṣūṣ*.

90. See the *silsilas* listed in Appendix 5.

91. Cf. *Fut.*, IV, pp.533, 547; *Muḥāḍarat*, II, pp.241, 260.

beggar.[92] Before we look at the nature of the links between the shaikh and the king in more detail it is worth recalling that although Kaykā'ūs was an opponent of the Ayyūbids,[93] Ibn ᶜArabī himself was on excellent terms with them; that Kaykā'ūs attacked northern Syria in a frustrated attempt to take Aleppo; and that he was suspected of shady dealings and compromises with the Franks and, in more general terms, of having too much sympathy for Christians.[94] This last point would seem confirmed by criticisms which Ibn ᶜArabī was to level at him, as we will see.

Nothing would seem to indicate that Ibn ᶜArabī had any contact with Kaykā'ūs' father, Kaykhusraw, whose rule over Anatolia dated from his first visit to the region in 602/1205. It is probable nonetheless that Majd al-Dīn introduced him to the Seljuq court during the reign of Kaykhusraw and that his friendship with Kaykā'ūs dates from this period. At any rate a passage in the *Futūḥāt*[95] attests to the fact that already in the year 609—only one year after Kaykā'ūs' enthronement—he was exchanging letters with him. As Asín Palacios has very justifiably noted, Ibn ᶜArabī's letters to the sultan of Rūm are more reminiscent of a father's correspondence to his son than of a subject's letters to his overlord; in fact in one of the letters Ibn ᶜArabī specifically refers to himself as Kaykā'ūs' 'father' (*wālid*).[96] But here one's agreement with Asín Palacios' views must come to an end, because he goes on to express indignation at Ibn ᶜArabī's advice in one of his letters to Kaykā'ūs about Christians. He is entitled to his reaction—which, coming from a pious ecclesiast trained in a seminary on the Iberian peninsula during the nineteenth century, is perfectly understandable. But when he declares that 'the *Futūḥāt* exude political hatred for the Christians',[97] no attentive reader of Ibn ᶜArabī can possibly take him seriously. And historians will be even more amazed to find Asín Palacios assert a little later on—quite peremptorily and without citing any evidence—that Ibn ᶜArabī's reason for returning to Anatolia in 612 was 'to supervise the Empire's anti-Christian policy'. So what exactly did the Shaikh al-Akbar say in the famous letter about the status of *dhimmīs* which, as he himself specifies, he wrote to

92. So e.g. *Wāfī*, IV, p.173.

93. For example he fought against al-Malik al-Ashraf, and was beaten by him in 615. Cf. *From Saladin to the Mongols*, p.160, and, for Kaykā'ūs himself, *EI²* s.v.

94. Cf. *From Saladin to the Mongols*, pp.440–41. Abū Shāma accused Kaykā'ūs of inciting the Franks to attack Damietta (cf. *Tarājim*, p.113)—a detail which Asín Palacios seems to have overlooked.

95. *Fut.*, IV, p.547.

96. *Muḥāḍarat*, II, p.260.

97. *Islam cristianizado*, p.94.

Kaykā'ūs in response to a missive addressed to him by the sultan in 609?[98] After reminding Kaykā'ūs that as sultan he is the substitute (*nā'ib*) for God on earth and, as such, is responsible for injustices perpetrated in his realm, he draws the sultan's attention to the situation of the Christians in his land. 'The worst thing that Islam and Muslims suffer in your realm is the sound of bells, the manifestation of infidelity, the affirmation of an associate of God, and the disappearance of the rules instituted by the Prince of Believers, ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, regarding *dhimmīs*: namely that neither in the city itself nor in the surrounding regions are they to build new churches, monasteries or hermitages, that they are not to repair any of these buildings if they become dilapidated, that they are not to prevent any Muslim from being given food and shelter in their churches for a period of up to three days, that they are not to hide spies, that they are not to conspire in secret against Muslims, that they are not to teach the Qur'ān to their children, and that they are not to make public show of their polytheism . . .'. In short, Ibn ᶜArabī is simply requesting the Seljuq sultan to apply the principles which traditionally (in spite of the fact that the attribution to Caliph ᶜUmar of the institutionalising of these rules is historically questionable) governed relations between Muslims and 'People of the Book': in other words, to observe the *sharīᶜa* scrupulously. This attitude may seem shocking today, but for a man who considered himself the defender of the *sharīᶜa* par excellence, entrusted by God with the mission of preserving it, it stems not from hatred but from a sincere concern to see the Sacred Law respected in every detail by everyone. Similarly, when he announces elsewhere that it is illicit for a Muslim to go to or stay in Jerusalem while the city is governed by Christians,[99] his guiding motive is the desire to spare Islam and Muslims from humiliation.[100] But, these considerations apart, we must also remember that Ibn ᶜArabī wrote the letter at a time when Christianity represented a threat to Islam. While day by day the Spaniards gained more ground in Andalusia, and in the very same year that the letter was written (609/1212) annihilated the Muslims at Las Navas de Tolosa, in the East the Franks still occupied a part of the *dār al-islām* and Byzantium remained a power to be contended with. The man who addressed his words to Kaykā'ūs was not someone full of hatred: he was a Muslim who was quite justifiably disturbed by the conquests being made by the Christian armies, and was

98. The text of the letter can be found in *Fut.*, IV, p.547; *Muḥāḍarat*, II, pp.260–61; *Islam cristianizado*, p.94.

99. *Fut.*, IV, p.460. He is obviously referring to Jerusalem's status after Kāmil had handed it over to Frederick the Second in 626.

100. Ibn ᶜArabī also based his judgement on the words of the Prophet when he declared, 'I am free from all obligation towards a Muslim who remains among infidels' (Abū Dāwūd, *jihād*, 95).

afraid of possible collusion with those armies on the part of their autochthonous co-religionists.

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Anatolia marked a major stage in Ibn ᶜArabī's wanderings in the East; we have already seen some of the reasons why, and we will soon discover others. But it was by no means the only stage. No attempt will be made here to retrace the itinerary and chronology of all his movements during this lengthy period,[101] movements which can in fact be reconstructed with a fair degree of precision thanks both to the *samāᶜs* and to the information contained in Ibn ᶜArabī's writings. However, it will be worth trying to isolate the most decisive phases in this period of wandering.

In 601 Ibn ᶜArabī left the Ḥijāz for Asia Minor, accompanied by Ḥabashī and Qūnawī. After a brief visit to Baghdad—where, as he was later to tell Ibn Najjār, he only stayed twelve days[102]—he stopped off for a while at Mosul. There, as we have seen, in 601/1204 he received his fourth investiture with the *khirqa*; this time the *khirqa* of Khaḍir was transmitted to him by a disciple of Qaḍīb al-Bān. It was also in Mosul that he composed his *Revelations of Mosul* (*al-tanazzulāt al-mawṣiliyya*), on the secret of prayer and ablution; and there too he made the acquaintance of a rather strange individual, Abū l-Ḥasan Thābit b. ᶜAntar (or ᶜAnbar) al-Ḥillī.[103] The judgements passed on this man by a number of chroniclers—they call him a liar, stupid, uncouth, conceited and a slanderer[104]—are so severe and critical that it is difficult to explain how Ibn ᶜArabī for his own part could possibly have seen in him 'one of the most devout and noble of men' (*min azhadi l-nās wa ashrafihim*).[105] The difficulty is compounded by the fact that, apart from producing an imitation of Abū Tammām's *Ḥamāsa*, Ibn ᶜAntar also wrote an imitation of the Qur'ān—something which in Islam is normally considered a crime. We happen to know that he read some of the 'suras' from this work of his to Ibn ᶜArabī, who acknowledged that in this respect the man was suffering from 'a certain disequilibrium' (*kāna fī mizājihi ikhtilāl*).[106]

Continuing on his way, Ibn ᶜArabī crossed the Jazīra and stopped off at Dunaysir.[107] There (although perhaps not during this first visit but on a later

101. See the chronological table in Appendix 1.

102. *Nafḥ*, II, p.162; *Wāfī*, IV, p.178.

103. *Muḥāḍarat*, I, p.7; II, p.184; *Fut.*, III, p.17; *Ijāza*, p.179.

104. Cf. e.g. *Tarājim*, p.52; *Shadharāt*, V, pp.4–6.

105. *Fut.*, III, p.17. 106. Ibid.

107. Ibn ᶜArabī mentions his journey through Diyār Bakr several times in the *Futūḥāt* (cf. e.g. I, p.213, II, pp.8, 15, IV, p.225). Even though in these passages he gives no dates, it must have been in the year 601/1204 that he crossed the Jazīra on his way from Mosul to Sivas and from there to Konya, passing through Malatya.

occasion) he encountered two men, each of whom belonged to a very specific spiritual category. One of them, ᶜUmar al-Farqawī, was one of the '*niyyātiyyūn*' or 'men of energetic intention':[108] the chief characteristic of these men is the permanent watch and control they keep over their intentions. Ibn ᶜArabī explains that they are 'on the heart of Jonah' (*ᶜalā qalb Yūnus*) and are dominated by sadness. The other man, al-Rajabī al-Khaṭarī, was—as his unusual *nisba* suggests—one of the 'men of the month of Rajab' (*al-rajabiyyūn*).[109] These men are given this name because they are only seized by the spiritual state corresponding to their station during the month of Rajab; during that period they are incapable of performing the slightest movement. 'However, among some of them something of what they perceived through intuitive revelation during the month of Rajab remains throughout the year . . .'.[110] That was the case with our man from Dunaysir, who was a greengrocer by trade and had the strange power of being able to unmask extremist Shīᶜites (*rawāfiḍ*) even when they tried to pass themselves of as Sunnites because he would perceive them in the form of pigs.[111] As Michel Chodkiewicz has very correctly pointed out, Ibn ᶜArabī would never have told such an anecdote if he had had any leaning—even a secret one—towards Shīᶜism, as Henry Corbin and his pupils have so insistently ascribed to him. Here it is only right to underline the fact that Ibn ᶜArabī's reference to the first four caliphs as each fulfilling the function of Pole—which, it will be remembered, was the highest position of all in the hierarchy of initiation—during their respective reigns[112] leaves no possible room for doubt as to the profundity and sincerity of his attachment to Sunnism. His severe criticisms of the Shīᶜites who, he claims, have been led astray by the devil (*shayṭān*) in their excessive love for the *ahl al-bayt* or inner circle of the Prophet's immediate family[113] point to exactly the same conclusion.

Although any explicit reference to the fact in Ibn ᶜArabī's own writings is lacking, two items of information allow us to establish that in 602/1205 he visited Syria, apparently for the first time. Firstly, we happen to know that in Ṣafar 602 he was in Konya and that eight months later, on Wednesday the 14th of Shawwāl to be precise, he was in Hebron;[114] to get from Anatolia to

108. *Fut.*, I, p.213. It will be remembered that Ibn Mujāhid and Ibn Qassūm also belonged to the same category.

109. Ibn ᶜArabī refers to his encounter with this '*rajabī*' in *Fut.*, II, p.8, *Muḥāḍarat*, I, pp.245–46, and also in the *Durra* (*Sufis of Andalusia*, p.160), where he only mentions his name. Cf. also *Seal of the Saints*, p.105.

110. *Fut.*, II, p.8; *Seal of the Saints*, pp.105–106.

111. *Fut.*, II, p.8; in the *Muḥāḍarat*, II, p.246 they are seen as dogs.

112. Cf. e.g. *Fut.*, II, p.6. 113. *Fut.*, I, p.282; cf. also III, p.138.

114. *Kitāb al-yaqīn* (R.G. § 834), MS. Yahya Efendi 2415, ff^{os} 124b-125.

Palestine he will have had to pass through Syria. Secondly, in the *Futūḥāt* he states that he had met Masᶜūd al-Ḥabashī,[115] a famous 'madman of God' (*muwallah*) who lived in Damascus and died on 15 Shawwāl 602;[116] this means Ibn ᶜArabī must have been in Syria earlier on in the year 602, some time between the months of Ṣafar and Shawwāl.

On his arrival for the first time in Syria—which was the country he was soon to choose as his home from home—Ibn ᶜArabī had an experience of 'mad love', of that insane passion which takes hold of the heart although the heart itself is unable to give any name to the object of its love. As he writes in the *Futūḥāt*: 'The most subtle love I have known is the love which makes one experience an inner passion, an agonising desire, a state of subjugation and languor, which prevents one from sleeping and eating while making one incapable of knowing for whom or through whom . . .. I experienced it myself on my arrival in Syria[117] for the first time. I felt an unknown desire (*maylan majhūlan*) for a considerable period, during the course of a spiritual and imaginal adventure in a corporeal form (*fī qiṣṣat ilāhiyya mutakhayyila fī ṣūratin jasadiyya*) . . .. I loved, and I had no idea whom I loved. Was the Beloved my Creator, or was He in my image? . . . Has a lover ever said this?'[118] During this period Ibn ᶜArabī was quite literally possessed by love, or rather possessed by God; he could not even sit down at a table without seeing Him at the other end. 'My imaginal power had attained to a stage where my love was able to give my Beloved a corporeal form in front of my very eyes, just as Gabriel had assumed a body in front of the Messenger of God. I could not look at Him; He would speak to me, I would listen to Him and understand what He said. In this way He rendered me incapable for several days of eating anything whatsoever. Every time the table was pulled up in front of me so that I could eat, He would stand in front of it, look at me, and say to me in words that I heard with my ears: "So you can eat while you contemplate Me!" Instantly I would stop eating. Even so, I experienced no hunger because I was nourished by Him [literally 'I was filled with Him'] to such an extent that I grew fatter and put on weight simply by looking at Him; in this way He became a substitute for food. My companions and my family were amazed to see me get fatter even though I was not taking any food at all. This actually

115. *Fut.*, I, p.250; II, p.522.

116. *Tarājim*, p.54.

117. There are, however, grounds for doubting whether the expression '*al-shām*' which Ibn ᶜArabī uses here refers to Syria in the strict sense of the term rather than—as was often the case in his time—to Syro-Palestine. In that case the events in question would have taken place in 598, which is when Ibn ᶜArabī passed through Palestine for the first time, and not in 602.

118. *Fut.*, II, pp.323–24. The passage occurs in the very long chapter on the 'Abode of Love' which has been translated into French by M. Gloton, *Traité de l'amour*, Paris 1986.

went on for a number of days, with me eating nothing and, even so, experiencing neither hunger nor thirst. But He was before my eyes at every moment, regardless of whether I was standing, sitting, moving around or motionless.'[119] From this time onwards Ibn ᶜArabī was able to practise continuous fasting (*al-wiṣāl*), just like the Prophet.[120] As he says elsewhere in the *Futūḥāt*:[121] 'I myself have gone through the experience of continuous fasting. I would pass the night without breaking my fast, and it was my Lord who nourished me and quenched my thirst during the nights of my uninterrupted fast. In the morning I would be full of energy and would have no desire to eat. People could even smell the odour of the food my Lord would give me. They would be amazed by its delicious aroma and would ask me: "Where did you get this smell of food? We have never smelt anything like it".'

Tireless, Ibn ᶜArabī continued on his travels. After a stay in Palestine, where he wrote several treatises in 602/1206,[122] he rejoined Aḥmad al-Ḥarīrī in Cairo in 603/1207[123] before departing for Mecca once again in 604/1207.[124] We have no information about his activities during 605; perhaps he remained in the Ḥijāz. We only catch up with him again in 606 at Aleppo,[125] but then lose sight of him once more until 608/1212. In that year—on the eleventh of Ramaḍān, 608—while in Baghdad Ibn ᶜArabī saw the gates of heaven open in a dream, and the coffers of the divine ruse (*khazā'in al-makr al-ilāhī*) pour their contents onto the earth 'like rain'. 'I awoke in a state of fear', he writes, 'and I pondered on how it is possible to escape from the ruse, and I saw that this is only granted through knowledge of the Scales of the Law.'[126] It was perhaps during this second stay in Baghdad (unless we are to date the incident to his first visit in 601) that one day Ibn ᶜArabī happened to cross paths with the caliph, who was riding through the city on horseback. Although he does not give the caliph's name, it can only have been al-Nāṣir, who reigned between 580 and 622. 'I was out walking one day, surrounded by my companions, when we saw the caliph coming our way. We drew back from the road, and I said to my disciples: "Whoever is the first among you to greet him [i.e. before the caliph has

119. *Fut.*, II, p.325.

120. The Prophet said in this connection, 'I am not like you; during the night my Lord nourishes me and quenches my thirst' (Bukhārī, *ṣawm*, 48, 49, 60). For Ibn ᶜArabī's interpretation of this *ḥadīth* cf. *Fut.*, I, pp.638, 657.

121. *Fut.*, I, p.638.

122. See the chronological table, Appendix 1.

123. *Rūḥ, samāᶜ* § 9.

124. *Fut.*, II, p.376.

125. *Kitāb al-tajalliyāt, samāᶜ* § 2.

126. *Fut.*, II, p.530; *Muḥāḍarat*, II, p.271. Cf. W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, Albany 1989, 267–68.

greeted you] will lose my respect!" When he drew up directly opposite us on his horse, he expected us to greet him because that is what people were accustomed to do in the presence of kings and caliphs; but we did nothing of the kind. He then looked at us and greeted us with a clear voice; all of us returned his greeting in a chorus . . .."[127] Once again it is necessary to draw attention to the distortion in Asín Palacios' approach, because in commenting on this incident he talks of Ibn ᶜArabī's 'irreverent attitude' and 'his spirit of occult rebelliousness'.[128] In fact Ibn ᶜArabī states at the very beginning of the passage that the attitude he adopted was in conformity with one of the elementary rules of the Sunna which requires that a person on horseback should take the initiative in greeting a person on foot.[129] The caliph himself drew the right conclusion, because according to Ibn ᶜArabī he praised and thanked them for their behaviour.

According to Osman Yahia[130] it will also have been in Baghdad in the same year, 608, that the Shaikh al-Akbar met Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (*d.* 632/1235), author of the *ᶜAwārif al-maᶜārif* and personal adviser to Caliph al-Nāṣir. However, although the passage in the *Shadharāt al-dhahab*[131] on which Yahia bases his conclusion does mention a *tête-à-tête* between the two Sufi masters, it gives no indication whatsoever of either place or date. In fact Ibn ᶜImād simply quotes the report by Yāfiᶜī (*d.* 768/1369) in his *Mir'āt al-janān*[132]—Yāfiᶜī apparently being the first compiler to mention the incident. 'The two masters and guides, Ibn ᶜArabī and Suhrawardī, met each other. They stayed together for a while, with lowered heads, and then parted without exchanging a single word. Subsequently Ibn ᶜArabī was asked: "What is your opinion of Suhrawardī?" He replied: "He is impregnated with the Sunna from tip to toe". Suhrawardī was also questioned as to what he thought of Ibn ᶜArabī, and he replied: "He is an ocean of essential truths (*baḥr al-ḥaqā'iq*)".' This memorable incident is also recorded by al-Qārī al-Baghdādī, who adds that it took place at Mecca.[133] However, a passage in the *Futūḥāt* does raise doubts as to the authenticity of the anecdote. In the passage in question[134] Ibn ᶜArabī alludes to the 'station', *maqām*, of Suhrawardī, basing what he says not on his personal impressions but on the testimony of one of Suhrawardī's disciples; the fact that he adds the *taraḥḥum*

127. *Fut.*, IV, p.492.
128. *Islam cristianizado*, p.92.
129. Bukhārī, *isti'dhān*, 5, 6; Muslim, *salām*, 1; *adab*, 46.
130. *Histoire et classification*, p.98.
131. *Shadharāt*, V, pp.193–4.
132. Yāfiᶜī, *Mir'āt al-janān*, 1338H, IV, p.101.
133. *Manāqib Ibn ᶜArabī*, p.29.
134. *Fut.*, I, p.609; also IV, p.192.

formula after mentioning Suhrawardī's name shows he was writing some time after the shaikh's death in 632. Ordinarily, however, when Ibn ᶜArabī refers to a spiritual teacher he has known—and this is particularly the case with famous Sufis—he does not fail to mention the fact; but in this case he makes no such statement. Also, knowing Ibn ᶜArabī and his spiritual intuition, it is fair to suppose that if he had indeed met Suhrawardī, however briefly, he would have divined his *maqām* without having to resort to the testimony of a third party.

Finally, during the course of one of his two periods in Baghdad Ibn ᶜArabī struck up an acquaintance with two disciples of Shaikh ᶜAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī: ᶜUmar al-Bazzāz[135] (*d.* 608/1211) and Abū l-Badr al-Tamāshikī.[136] These two men told him many stories about Abū l-Suᶜūd b. Shibl, who was another famous disciple of Jīlānī.

After Baghdad, what was Ibn ᶜArabī's next destination in his wanderings during 608–9? Very probably it was Mecca. Indeed in his *Durrat al-fākhira*[137] he mentions that in 608 he buried one of his companions at Shiᶜb ᶜAlī, which is the name of one of the paths used for climbing to the summit of Mount Abū Qubays at Mecca.[138] Also, during the course of his discussion with Ibn Najjār in Damascus, Ibn ᶜArabī told him he was performing the pilgrimage with a caravan (*ḥājjan maᶜa rakb*) when he stopped off at Baghdad in 608.[139] We can at any rate be quite sure that he was in the holy places during the months of Rajab, Shaᶜbān and Ramaḍān of 611 (1214–5), which is when he wrote the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*. After another stay in Syria—during the course of which he produced the commentary on the *Tarjumān*, also in the year 611—the Shaikh al-Akbar took to the road again back to Asia Minor. At the beginning of Ramaḍān, 612, he was staying in Sivas when a vision announced to him the imminent victory of Kaykā'ūs over the Franks of Antioch.[140] 'While I was in Sivas, during the month of Ramaḍān in the period when the sultan [i.e. Kaykā'ūs] was besieging Antioch, I saw in a dream that he had set up mangonels all round the fortress and was hurling projectiles, and that the [enemy] chief was killed. I interpreted the vision, explaining to myself that the

135. For ᶜUmar al-Bazzāz cf. D. Gril's biographical sketch in *Risāla*, p.236.
136. Ibid., p.235.
137. *Sufis of Andalusia* § 58, p.149.
138. Cf. *Kitāb al-Istibṣār*, Casablanca 1985, p.5.
139. *Nafḥ*, II, p.163, where the words are '*ḥājjan maᶜa rakbin*', whereas in *Wāfī*, IV, p.178 we find '*ḥājjan* min *Makka maᶜa rakbin*'. According to this second version Ibn ᶜArabī was *returning* from the pilgrimage with the Iraqi caravan. We have no information about Ibn ᶜArabī's movements between 608 and 610; some time around this period he must have gone to Anatolia, as we saw earlier, and from there to Aleppo in Syria, where in 610 he provided his disciples with a commentary on the *Kitāb al-tajalliyāt* (cf. O. Yahia, *al-Mashriq*, 1966, I, p.109).
140. For the battle in question cf. *Shadharāt*, V, p.49.

rocks which were being hurled symbolised the success of his plans and the realisation of his aims, and that he would take the city. Thanks be to God, that is just how things turned out. He conquered the city on the day of the festival of the breaking of the fast; twenty days had passed between my vision and his victory, and this all happened in the year 612. A short time before his victory I wrote a poem to him from Malatya, informing him of my vision.'[141]

As we have seen, from this time onwards Ibn ᶜArabī settled for a number of years in Anatolia, the *bilād al-Rūm*; he seems to have stayed mostly in Malatya.[142] As a rule, his stays in Anatolia are only considered for their immediate repercussions on Seljuq politics (Asín Palacios) and for their longer-term repercussions on the development of oriental Sufism (Henry Corbin).[143] What seems to have been forgotten is that these stays represented a very important period in the spiritual and emotional life of the Shaikh al-Akbar. So, for example, it was in Konya (exactly when, we do not know) that he experienced the most painful night in his life—the night when he was given the knowledge of the distinction between *qaḍā'*, or pre-eternal decree, and *qadar*, existentiated decree.[144] 'I contemplated this Abode in Konya, during the course of a night which was the longest I have ever had to live through . . .. It was then that I understood the difference between *qaḍā'* and *qadar* . . ..' The continuation of the text, written in the form of a letter in verse and rhymed prose addressed by Ibn ᶜArabī to 'a brother in God'[145] to describe to him his experience, suggests that this particular revelation marked the culmination of what had been a trying and difficult period. 'When', he writes to him, 'your friend decided to take to the road and realise his aim, a steep hill (*ᶜaqaba ka'ūd*) interposed itself between him and the

141. *Muḥāḍarat*, II, p.241.

142. This is at any rate the implication of a number of *samāᶜ*s: cf. the chronological table, Appendix 1.

143. Cf. H. Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, pp.69–70.

144. Regarding the distinction according to Ibn ᶜArabī between *qaḍā'* and *qadar*, cf. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, p.131. Here he explains that *qaḍā'* is God's decree concerning things according to what He knows of them and in them (*ḥukmu llāh fī l-ashyā' ᶜalā ḥaddi ᶜilmihi bihā wa fihā*), whereas *qadar* is 'the actual existentiation at a given moment in time of that for which things are predestined by their essence, and no more' (*wa l-qadar tawqīt mā hiya ᶜalayhi al-ashyā' fī ᶜaynihā min ghayri mazīd . . .*). We will examine this distinction more closely in the next chapter.

145. *Fut.*, III, pp.112–5; part of the letter is also reproduced in *Kitāb al-kutub*, pp.55–6. This text poses a problem. In it Ibn ᶜArabī specifies that he went from Konya to '*Dār al-Bayḍā'* to attend the funeral of this 'brother', Shihāb al-Dīn, who died shortly after receiving the letter; but which town was he referring to? (In his *muᶜjam* Yāqūt lists 16 places called '*Dār al-Bayḍā'*.) It cannot have been Casablanca (as O. Yahia believed; he also made the mistake of dating the episode to 598 and so to Ibn ᶜArabī's 'Maghreb' period, *Histoire et classification*, p.96), because Casablanca was only built in the eighteenth century (cf. *EI*² s.v. Dār al-Bayḍā), but must have been somewhere either in Anatolia or nearby.

contemplation and attainment of my goal . . .. I saw that it was difficult to climb and posed an obstacle between me and the meeting I was hoping for. I stopped a little short of it, during a night without a dawn which held I knew not what in store for me. I sought for the "cord of preservation" (*ḥabl al-ʿiᶜtiṣām*) and clung to the "solid handle" (*al-ᶜurwat al-wuthqā*: Qur'ān 2:256). A voice called out to me, saying: "Persevere just as you are!" . . . When I came back to myself I rejoiced in the knowledge that my misery was over . . ..' Ibn ᶜArabī is too enigmatic to allow us to determine what particular type of inner ordeal he was facing; but what is very interesting is that many years later Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī had exactly the same experience, also in Konya and, as he tells us, when he was about the same age as his master. Qūnawī's account[146] is even more allusive and even less explicit than Ibn ᶜArabī's, and sheds no further light on this mysterious episode in the life of the Shaikh al-Akbar; it does, however, at least confirm its importance. 'I address these few lines to you', Qūnawī writes to the *qāḍī* Ibn Zakī, 'from Konya, on an extraordinary day and in a strange state, after passing through some ordeals and contemplating some states, both external and internal, which I had been anticipating. It so happens that in this same town, and at about the same period in his life, my master [i.e. Ibn ᶜArabī] experienced two extraordinary things (*amrāni ᶜaẓīmāni*) to which he gave the name of "hill" (*ᶜaqaba*). Regarding one of them he composed a *qaṣīda* which can be found in the *Futūḥāt*, in the twelfth volume of the first draft; its first verse is "A hill barred my way during the journey . . .".[147] As for the other, he related it to me in detail.'

It was also in Konya, although once again we cannot be sure of the date, that the Shaikh al-Akbar made the acquaintance of a saint who was quite unique because—as he explains—he was the only one of his category; it was this category which gave him his strange name, Sāqiṭ b. Rafraf b. Saqīṭ al-ᶜArsh.[148] 'I saw him in Konya. The verse of the Qur'ān [which is special to him] is: "I swear to it by the star that sets" (Qur'ān 53:1). His state does not go beyond that; he concerns himself only with his soul and with God. He is a man of great calibre (*kabīr al-sha'n*), and his state is extraordinary. The mere fact of seeing him influences the state of whoever sees him. He is a contrite and humble man; that is what I saw him to be, and his personality amazed me . . ..'[149]

Finally, it was in Malatya—where his son, Muḥammad Saᶜd al-Dīn, was

146. *Nafaḥāt ilāhiyya*, MS. Bibliothèque Nationale 1354, ff^os 110b-111 (Tehran edition, p.145; personal communication from W. Chittick).

147. In the Cairo edition of 1329H. the reference corresponds to III, p.114.

148. Cf. *Fut.*, II, pp.14, 456; III, p.228.

149. *Fut.*, II, p.14.

born in 618—that at approximately the same time Ibn ᶜArabī buried the man who had been his friend and travelling companion for more than twenty years: Badr al-Ḥabashī. But between two beings such as Ibn ᶜArabī and Ḥabashī death is no real separation, and from beyond the tomb Ḥabashī continued to sustain his master and have conversations with him. 'When death came to him [i.e. Ḥabashī], in my house, he was completely willing and prepared to meet his Lord. He died in the night . . .. I went to his tomb during the afternoon and complained to him about something that had happened to me after his death. He answered me from his tomb and praised God. I heard his voice quite distinctly when he expressed his concern regarding what I had told him.'[150] But although their discussions continued beyond the tomb, Ibn ᶜArabī's physical separation from the man who for so long had travelled the roads of the Maghreb and Mashreq beside him coincided with the termination of his own period of wandering; the coincidence was no doubt more than accidental. When he set off for Damascus, where he ended his life on earth, he was never to return.

150. *Durra*, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.158–59.

10. Damascus, 'Refuge of the Prophets'

IBN ᶜARABĪ AND THE SYRIAN *FUQAHĀ'*

'As for Damascus, she is the paradise of the East, the horizon from which its dazzling light arises, . . . the young bride among the cities whose veils we have lifted. She is adorned with plants whose flowers are full of fragrance, and she rises up under the silky finery of her gardens . . .. On her ceremonial bed she glitters with the most magnificent of ornaments. She is so glorious that God had the Messiah and his mother stay there . . .. Her soil is so wearied with the abundance of her waters that it longs to be thirsty . . .. Orchards form a circle around her similar to the halo surrounding the moon; they hug her like the calyx hugs the flower . . .. How right they were, those who have said about her: "If paradise is on earth, then it is certainly Damascus; and if in heaven, then this city vies with its glory and equals its beauties".'[1]

It is impossible to read this famous passage from the *Voyages* by Ibn Jubayr (*d.* 614/1217) without being reminded immediately of certain descriptions of Seville, also compared to the garden of Eden; and one may well wonder whether, in choosing Damascus from all the cities of the East, Ibn ᶜArabī's wish was not to rediscover a little of the atmosphere and landscape of his native Andalusia. Damascus was like Seville in another respect as well: it was highly coveted. Between 589 and 658 the city was besieged no less than a dozen times; each time, it will be noted, both the besieged and the besiegers were Ayyūbids.[2] This determination on the part of Saladin's divided successors

1. Ibn Jubayr, *Voyages*, p.301.

2. Sometimes the besieging force was helped by outside allies, such as Seljuqs or Khwārizmians. The siege of 658 was conducted against the Ayyūbids by the Mongols.

to attempt to take possession of the ancient Umayyad capital is perfectly understandable. Thanks to its geographical position Damascus was simultaneously the terminus for the commercial routes from the Jazīra, Anatolia and Northern Syria, and one of the chief centres for assembling the pilgrimage caravans. At the same time it was also a vital crossroads for the control of the military routes between Northern Syria and the Jazīra on the one hand and between Palestine and Egypt on the other. With Saladin dead a fratricidal struggle broke out between his heirs, with Damascus both the stake and the hostage. After four successive wars it was Saladin's brother, ᶜĀdil, who in 595 finally succeeded in capturing the city, which he entrusted to the governership of his son Muᶜaẓẓam. Between 595 and 624 the Syrian metropolis enjoyed a period of relative peace, disturbed however in 597 by a fresh attempt to take the city on the part of the brothers Ẓāhir and Afḍal.[3]

It must however be emphasised that—with the exception of the sieges in 626 and 635, which led to violent conflicts—the city and its population were hardly if at all affected by these wars taking place beneath its walls: wars which all in all were not particularly violent and as a general rule ended in amicable arrangements being agreed on betweeen the opposing sides.[4] Similarly, the repeated changes of ruler seem hardly to have produced any noticeable alterations in the configuration of Syrian society in general or Damascene society in particular; in both cases things remained much the same as they had been under the Zangids. Soldiers occupied the most important posts and held the reins of power; it was they who determined the outcome of the fighting and so, in a sense, the destiny of the country.[5] As for the religious dignitaries, it was they who guaranteed the smooth functioning of the institutions governing the city's social and everyday existence. The nature of their role made them intermediaries between the political powers, which nominated them, and the population, which consulted them. They served the prince who, when the need arose, appealed to their good services to mobilise the population in the direction of his political aims; Nūr al-Dīn, and to an even greater extent Saladin, are just two rulers who resorted to this procedure in their policy of inciting people to holy war, *jihād*.[6] However, sometimes the *ᶜulamā'* proved recalcitrant. Two well-known historical events (which we will come back to later) provide illustrations of these two alternative scenarios. In 626/1229 Nāṣir Dāwūd, sultan of Damascus, asked

3. For the history of Damascus throughout the Ayyūbid period see Stephen Humphreys' invaluable work *From Saladin to the Mongols*.

4. We will come back to these events in due course, but it is worth mentioning here that the siege in 643—which is outside the scope of this study—also resulted in considerable damage.

5. Cf. *From Saladin to the Mongols*, pp.6–7.

6. Cf. E. Sivan, *L'Islam et la croisade*, pp.58–130.

Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *khaṭīb* of the Great Mosque, to stir up the population of Damascus against Kāmil, who had just handed Jerusalem over to Frederick the Second. On the other hand, in his sermon in 637/1240 ᶜIzz al-Dīn Sulamī criticised the policies of Ṣāliḥ Ismāᶜīl—who was proposing to hand over two strongholds to the Franks and was even inviting them to come and buy arms in Damascus—and issued a *fatwā* prohibiting the sale of weapons to non-Muslims.

The grand *qāḍī* or judge (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*) was, like the *khaṭīb* or city scribe, appointed by the sultan, but he enjoyed even greater prestige as a consequence of the responsibilities and range of powers entrusted to him. On his shoulders fell the responsibility of ensuring that justice ruled, and consequently of applying the *sharīᶜa* throughout the *bilād al-Shām*—in other words the territory extending from Qinnasrīn in the north down to al-ᶜArīsh in the south. It will be remembered that prior to Baybars' reform in 664, the *qaḍā' al-aᶜlā* was always given to a Shāfiᶜite, which was the majority *madhhab* or school in this part of the Muslim world.[7] *Qāḍī*s and *khaṭīb*s alike were preferably chosen from the *buyūtāt* or noble families of Damascus, and in all cases were selected from the *ᶜulamā'*—those men who, as Ibn Jubayr tells us, gave themselves amazing surnames and were fond of trailing their coat tails. '. . . One hears one's fill of "Heart of the Faith", "Sun of the Faith", "Full Moon of the Faith", "Star of the Faith" . . . and there is no end to their lists of artificial names and all the accompanying paraphernalia. Particularly among the jurists, you will find all you want in the way of "Princes of the Wise" and "Perfection of the Imāms" . . . there are no limits to these absurd titles. Each of these individuals makes his way to the dais of the great, haughtily trailing his coat tails, tilting his body and head to give himself an air of importance.'[8] Regardless of whether or not they occupied official positions, the *ᶜulamā'* taught in the *madrasa*s, training new generations of *fuqahā'* and *muḥaddithūn*. They appeared to be—or rather wanted to appear to be—the conscience of Islam at the heart of society, issuing religious decrees (*fatwā*s) and giving advice to princes who listened to them or at the very least treated them with consideration. So, we see ᶜĀdil abolishing illegal taxes (*mukūs*) to mollify the *fuqahā'* who had become profoundly annoyed at his policy towards the Franks; and in 628 al-Malik al-Ashraf ordered the incarceration of Shaikh ᶜAlī al-Ḥarīrī at the request of ᶜIzz al-Dīn Sulamī and Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Ṣalāḥ, who were accusing the shaikh of being a heretic and were demanding his execution.

It is true that during this troubled period the doctors of the law were having

7. For the *qaḍā' al-aᶜlā* in Syria cf. L. Pouzet, *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, I, pp.115–42.

8. *Voyages*, p.344.

a hard time. There were many people who came both from the East and from the West, bringing subversive ideas with them; they invaded the *bilād al-Shām* and started propagating their pernicious doctrines, disturbing and confusing people's minds. As early as 587/1191, the *ʿulamā'* had had Suhrawardī of Aleppo executed for professing a disquieting doctrine in which Plato, Zoroaster and Avicenna rubbed shoulders with Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī, Dhū l-Nūn al-Miṣrī and Ḥallāj. The danger had become more acute by the beginning of the seventh century, with the arrival of a growing number of immigrants from Andalusia and the Maghreb. Ibn ʿArabī was by no means the only person whose heart had become set on Damascus: other people from the Maghreb had shown their preference for Syria over Egypt and had settled in Damascus. And there, just as in Cairo, they were rather well received. 'The advantages enjoyed by foreigners in this city were innumerable—particularly the benefits reserved for those among the faithful who knew the Qur'ān off by heart or who aspired to learn it. The prestige they enjoyed in the city was truly wonderful. No doubt every country in the East had the same attitude towards them; but the attention they were given in this particular country was greater, and they were honoured even more generously.'[9] Admittedly this account by Ibn Jubayr was written in 580/1184, when Saladin was ruler; but things do not seem to have changed very much under his successors. People from the Maghreb still had at their disposal a *zāwiya* or place of retreat in the Mosque of the Umayyads as well as in the Kallasa, not to mention two additional *madrasas*. However, these were the only gathering-places specifically for people from the Maghreb, who—as Louis Pouzet's investigations have shown[10]—never created special districts or quarters for themselves any more than they ever formed themselves into a community in the strict sense of the word.

Faithful to their traditions, the chroniclers and the writers of obituaries only chose to record the names of those foreigners who distinguished themselves in some particular discipline. Examples are the grammarian Ibn Mālik, who produced his famous *Alfiyya* in Damascus and died there in 672/1273, the Banū Birzāl,[11] who came from Seville and made names for themselves in *ḥadīth*, and the Banū Zawāwī,[12] who were from Bougie and provided Damascus with two great Mālikite *qāḍīs*; as we will see later on, Ibn ʿArabī had close connections with various members of these two families. And there were others, evidently greater in number, who owed the privilege

9. Ibid., p.332.
10. L. Pouzet, 'Maghrébins à Damas au VII^{e}/XIII^{e} siècle', *B.E.O.* XXVIII for 1975.
11. *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, I, pp.44, 106, 503, etc.
12. Ibid., I, pp.107–10.

of their prominent position in these vast biographical catalogues to the violent polemics their teachings provoked. These were the *ittiḥādiyyūn* or teachers of Union, sometimes also referred to as *aṣḥāb al-ḥulūl*, 'those who teach incarnationism'. This is the rubric—a little vague but very convenient—under which Muslim writers from the Middle Ages down to the present day continue to class all adherents of forms of Sufism which in their eyes are on the adventurous side: not the Sufism of a Ghazālī or a Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (respectable and inoffensive men, or at least that is how they were perceived) but the Sufism of men like Ḥallāj, Ibn ʿArabī and Ibn Sabʿīn who, in spite of the considerable differences between their teachings, all shared in common the one vision of the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) in creation (*khalq*), of the Face of God in the face of man. Although these lists of heretics, hunted down by Quṭb al-Dīn Qasṭallānī, Ibn Taymiyya, Sakhāwī and Ibn Khaldūn (to mention only the most famous of their adversaries), do present a few occasional variations, they are all agreed on a basic number of individuals guilty of 'major impiety':[13] Ḥallāj, who always tops the list, Ibn ʿArabī, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Ibn Sabʿīn, Shushtarī, Tilimsānī, Ibn Sawdakīn, Qūnawī, and so on. The list drawn up by Sakhāwī (*d.* 902/1497) has the advantage of laying claim to be exhaustive,[14] and this means that we find in it the names of a good number of disciples and supporters of Ibn ʿArabī in the East, especially in Damascus. The list compiled by Ibn Khaldūn[15] (*d.* 808/1406) is much more concise, but also contains more subtle nuances. As the author of the *Muqaddima*, he was able to distinguish between heretics who were 'People of Theophany' and those who were 'People of Absolute Unity'—in other words, put more simply, between the school of Ibn ʿArabī and the school of Ibn Sabʿīn, which less subtle polemicists often confused.

Of all the *ittiḥādiyyūn* from the Maghreb given a welcome in Damascus during this century, the 'witch-hunters' cited first and foremost Ibn ʿArabī, ʿAfīf al-Dīn Tilimsānī (*d.* 690/1291) and Ibn Hūd (*d.* 699/1299), who were both notorious Sabʿīnians,[16] and also Shaikh Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ḥarrālī (*d.* 638/1240). The lengthy biographical sketches of al-Ḥarrālī by Ghubrīnī and Maqqarī[17] do not allow us to connect him either with any specific trend in Sufism or with any known master, which means we will have to wait until some brave pioneer undertakes the task of editing and publishing his works

13. Cf. Massignon, *Passion*, II, pp.308–15.
14. Sakhāwī, *al-Qawl al-munbī*, Berlin 2849, Spr. 790, ff^{os} 27–36b.
15. Ibn Khaldūn, *Shifā' al-sā'il*, ed. Khalifé, Beirut 1959, pp.51–2.
16. We will come back later to ʿAfīf al-Dīn, who met Ibn ʿArabī in Damascus. As for Ibn Hūd, he was born in 633—five years after Ibn ʿArabī's death—and so they never met.
17. *ʿUnwān*, pp.145–57; *Nafḥ*, II, pp.187–9. Cf. also Dermenghem, *Vie des saints musulmans*, pp.277–288, and Pouzet, *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, I, p.258.

before we will be in a position to know any more about his teaching and spiritual genealogy.[18] On the other hand, it is well known that his commentary on the Qur'ān aroused the displeasure of the jurist ʿIzz al-Dīn Sulamī, who had him expelled from Damascus in 632; this would seem to be the sole reason for his inclusion in Sakhāwī's list of *ittiḥādiyyūn*. But, all this aside, it is important to emphasise the fact that—unlike Ḥarrālī—Ibn ʿArabī did not suffer from any form of persecution in Syria; on the contrary, we happen to know that he was on close and good terms with a number of eminent people in Damascus, and in particular with some of the city's most highly reputed jurists. So, among his teachers in *ḥadīth* whom he mentions in the *Ijāza*,[19] we find the great *qāḍī* ʿAbd al-Ṣamād al-Ḥarastānī[20] (*d.* 614/1217) who, as Ibn ʿArabī tells us at the start of the *Muḥāḍarat al-abrār*,[21] transmitted to him Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the Mosque of the Umayyads and also bestowed on him an *ijāza ʿāmma*. He had links as well with the *qāḍī* Shams al-Dīn Khuwayy (*d.* 637/1239), and had a vision about him regarding his nomination to the post of *qaḍā' al-aʿlā*;[22] Khuwayy was in fact *qāḍī al-quḍāt* on two occasions, firstly between 623 and 629, and again from 635 until his death in 637.[23] We also possess some reports by later writers to the effect that Khuwayy 'served Ibn ʿArabī like a slave' (*kāna yakhdumuhu khidmat al-ʿabīd*),[24] and the author of the *Manāqib Ibn ʿArabī*[25] even adds that the *qāḍī* used to give him thirty dirhams a day. But as to how credible these pieces of information are, originating as they do from sources that postdate Ibn ʿArabī by several centuries, that is another matter. All the authors in question—Maqqarī, Shaʿrānī, Ibn al-ʿImād, al-Qārī al-Baghdādī—repeat the same thing in almost identical terms one after another, and if we trace what they say back to its source we arrive at Fayrūzābādī, author of the famous *Muḥīṭ* who died in the Yemen in 817/1414. One also notes that Fayrūzābādī is the first person to transmit a set number—or rather a set type—of traditions (*akhbār*) about Ibn ʿArabī's life, and more specifically about his relations with the jurists (*fuqahā'*) of his time. In fact all of our authors have based themselves on the text of a *fatwā* drawn up by Fayrūzābādī at the request of the king of

18. P. Nwyia has translated his *Ḥikam* in *Ibn ʿAṭā Allāh et la naissance de la confrérie shadhilite*, pp.56–62, as well as devoting a seminar to him at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in 1979–1980.

19. *Ijāza*, p.175.

20. For Ḥarastānī cf. *Tarājim*, p.106, *Shadharāt*, V, p.60; Pouzet, *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, I, pp.138–40.

21. *Muḥāḍarat*, II, p.8.

22. *Fut.*, III, p.508.

23. For Shams al-Dīn Khuwayy cf. *Tarājim*, pp.108, 148, 154, 169; *Wāfī*, VI, p.375; Pouzet, *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, I, pp.80, 137, 168.

24. Cf. e.g. *Nafḥ*, II, p.179; Shaʿrānī, *al-Yawāqīt wa l-jawāhīr*, Cairo 1369H, p.9.

25. *Manāqib Ibn ʿArabī*, p.30.

the Yemen, al-Nāṣir b. Aḥmad b. al-Ashraf[26] (*d.* 827/1423). According to al-Qārī al-Baghdādī, who met Fayrūzābādī at Delhi in 784,[27] this Yemenite king had found himself being reproached by the *ʿulamā'* of his country for possessing Ibn ʿArabī's writings in his libraries,[28] and so he questioned him as to the legality of reading such works. In his famous *fatwā* Fayrūzābādī begins by praising the Shaikh al-Akbar very highly, and then, so as to lend extra weight to his statements, he cites the example of several jurists—including Shams al-Dīn Khuwayy—who displayed benevolence and respect for Ibn ʿArabī. Unfortunately our fervent supporter of Ibn ʿArabī's school fails to specify the sources of his information, and when we consider that he was separated from Ibn ʿArabī by over a century we are entitled to question the authenticity of the details he reports. Our doubts are even further justified by the fact that he appears also to have been the first writer to mention one particular incident in Ibn ʿArabī's life which, as we will see later, seems altogether implausible.

These same authors—Maqqarī, Shaʿrānī and so on—are equally dependent on Fayrūzābādī for their report that Ibn ʿArabī married the daughter of Damascus' great Mālikite *qāḍī*.[29] In fact, however, it was only from 664 onwards—that is, long after Ibn ʿArabī's death—that the four *madhāhib* or schools, including the Mālikite, were allowed to have representatives in the highest office. Historians such as Maqqarī or Fayrūzābādī himself cannot possibly have been unaware of such a well-known historical fact—which succeeded in provoking some very lively reactions among the *ʿulamā'*—so what they must have meant is that Ibn ʿArabī married the daughter of the man who was subsequently to become the first great Mālikite *qāḍī* of Damascus: ʿAbd al-Salām al-Zawāwī (*d.* 681/1282). In similar fashion these same authors also allude to Ibn ʿArabī's friendship with 'the *qāḍī* Ibn Zakī', who however only held this office from 641 onwards—once again long after Ibn ʿArabī's death. But one point we can be quite sure of is that the Shaikh al-Akbar had already become friends in the Maghreb with one of the most eminent members of the Banū Zawāwī, Abū Zakarīyā Yaḥyā (*d.* 611/1214)—a man whose works he studied and with whom, as he tells us in the *Rūḥ*, he performed a day's retreat.[30] It is also perfectly plausible that in Damascus he

26. Regarding this sultan cf. *Shadharāt*, VII, p.177.

27. *Manāqib Ibn ʿArabī*, p.63; Fayrūzābādī's *fatwā*, together with an account of the circumstances which led to its composition, is to be found on pp.64–72.

28. Presumably this is why Sakhāwī includes him among the *ittiḥādiyyūn*: cf. *al-Qawl al-munbī*, f° 27b.

29. *Nafḥ*, II, p.179; *Yawāqīt*, p.9; *Manāqib Ibn ʿArabī*, p.30.

30. *Rūḥ*, § 42, p.124; *Sufis of Andalusia*, pp.137–38. Cf. also *Fut.*, II, pp.21, 637. For Abū Zakarīyā al-Zawāwī see *Tashawwuf*, § 256, p.428; *ʿUnwān*, § 29, pp.135–40.

was in contact with ʿAbd al-Salām, the future *qāḍī* and the first of the Banū Zawāwī to settle in Syria (starting from 616).[31] However, in the absence of further information it is impossible either to confirm or deny that he married the man's daughter. One other point worth mentioning is that these same late sources specify that ʿAbd al-Salām renounced his office of *qāḍī* as the result of an intervention by the Shaikh al-Akbar.[32] In fact Zayn al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Salām did indeed resign from his post—which he had only accepted with reluctance—but in 673. Are we to see in this an allusion to a *post mortem* intervention on the part of Ibn ʿArabī, or the proof of a total and hardly believable ignorance on the part of our authors as to the dates when the first Mālikite *qāḍī* of Damascus held power?

One other statement by Fayrūzābādī was to provoke a great deal of controversy: the claim that ʿIzz al-Dīn Sulamī, the 'great shaikh of the Shāfiʿites', had confided to someone close to him that Ibn ʿArabī was the Pole, *quṭb*. Considering the impassioned debate that for several centuries now has made this story a focus of dissension between Ibn ʿArabī's opponents and supporters, we need to bring some order into the mass of texts which over the course of time has built up around the 'ʿIzz al-Dīn affair'. The first point to be established is that the first author to refer to this episode is not Fayrūzābādī but ʿAbd al-Ghaffār al-Qūṣī, who died in 708[33] and may therefore have been personally acquainted with disciples of Ibn ʿArabī and of Shaikh ʿIzz al-Dīn. This is what he writes in his *Waḥīd*:[34] 'It is said that one day the servant of ʿIzz al-Dīn entered the Great Mosque in the company of his shaikh [i.e. ʿIzz al-Dīn] and said to him: "You have promised to show me the Pole!" The shaikh replied: "That is the Pole"—pointing with his finger to Ibn ʿArabī, who was sitting surrounded by his students. "Oh master, do you really mean to say that about him?"[35] "Yes, he is the Pole", the shaikh reiterated.' When one compares this relatively succinct report with what we find in later writers, one notes immediately that over time the anecdote has been remarkably extended, and has even become twice as long. Along with Ṣafadī (*d.* 764/1362) the 'counter-anecdote' appears: Ibn ʿArabī has become a 'bad guy'. In this case, it is important to draw attention to the fact that Ṣafadī is following Dhahabī, who himself quotes Ibn Taymiyya whose sentiments with regard to

31. For ʿAbd al-Salām Zawāwī, cf. *Shadharāt*, V, p.374.

32. *'taraka al-qaḍā' bi naẓratin waqaʿat ʿalayhi min al-shaykh': Nafḥ*, II, p.179. Cf. also *Yawāqīt*, p.9.

33. For further details about the man cf. D. Gril, *Une source inédite pour l'histoire du taṣawwuf*, I.F.A.O. centenary volume, Cairo 1980, pp.441ff.

34. *Waḥīd*, ms. Bibliothèque Nationale 3525, f° 217 (information kindly provided by D. Gril).

35. What are we to make of this remark by ʿIzz al-Dīn's servant (*khadīm*)? Did he have *a priori* reasons for supposing that his master could not say such a thing about Ibn ʿArabī?

Ibn ʿArabī are well known. According to this second version of events, ʿIzz al-Dīn declares that Ibn ʿArabī is a bad and false shaikh (*shaykh sū' wa kadhdhāb*) who teaches the eternity of the world and has depraved sexual habits.[36] Ṣafadī also adduces another report—which also goes back to ʿIzz al-Dīn—to the effect that Ibn ʿArabī had married a *jinn* who on top of everything else used to beat him! Finally, with al-Qārī al-Baghdādī,[37] Maqqarī[38] (who both base their accounts on Fayrūzābādī's *fatwā*) and Ibn al-ʿImād,[39] who for his part quotes from Munāwī (*d.*1031/1621), the third version appears. According to this, ʿIzz al-Dīn supposedly kept silent when one of his pupils described Ibn ʿArabī as a heretic (*zindīq*), but on the same evening revealed to his servant that Ibn ʿArabī was the Pole. To round off our analysis it must be added that Sakhāwī—who is certainly unflagging in his efforts to be exhaustive—gives all three versions of the story together in his *Qawl al-munbī*,[40] and also adds details about the chains of transmission of the negative version, which come out as follows: Dhahabī→Ibn Taymiyya→Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd→ʿIzz al-Dīn Sulamī on the one hand, Ṣafadī→Ibn Sayyid al-Nās→Ibn Daqīq→ʿIzz al-Dīn on the other. Needless to say, Sakhāwī rejects all the other versions. As to who is wrong and who is right, it is impossible to give a conclusive answer; however, it is worth noting that Shaikh Qūṣī is not exactly someone whom one could call a defender of Ibn ʿArabī, and that in this same passage in the *Waḥīd* he says some very harsh things about ʿAfīf al-Dīn Tilimsānī. Otherwise, it is important to understand that the reason why all these writers made such an issue of proving or disproving the authenticity of the anecdote was ʿIzz al-Dīn Sulamī's exceptional reputation among the *ʿulamā'*. The man whom Massignon described as 'a Shāfiʿite canonist of the rarest rectitude'[41] was the perfect embodiment of an upright jurist and uncompromising Sunnite. As already mentioned, he did not hesitate to take a stand against the king for colluding with the Christian enemy, or to have those who seemed to him to endanger orthodoxy expelled or put in prison. He was himself sent into exile to Cairo by Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl; once there he was appointed grand *qāḍī* and was instrumental in triggering off anti-Christian riots at Fusṭāṭ when the Templars attacked Nablus in 640/1242.[42]

Before leaving the 'ʿIzz al-Dīn affair' behind it will be worth quoting a passage from Ibn ʿArabī which is apparently the only place where he refers to

36. *Wāfī*, IV, p.174.

37. *Manāqib Ibn ʿArabī*, pp.27–8.

38. *Nafḥ*, II, p.178.

39. *Shadharāt*, V, p.192.

40. *al-Qawl al-munbī*, ff^{os} 38–40b.

41. *Opera minora*, III, p.273. For ʿIzz al-Dīn cf. *Tarājim*, p.216; *Shadharāt*, V, pp.301–2.

42. Cf. E. Sivan, *L'Islam et la croisade*, p.151.

ᶜIzz al-Dīn. It must be said straight away that the passage in question fails to throw any light on the story discussed above because it has to do with an incident that occurred in Ibn ᶜArabī's 'Imaginal World'. This is how he describes the incident in his *Dīwān*: 'During the course of a vision I saw the Shāfiᶜite jurist ᶜIzz al-Dīn b. ᶜAbd al-Salām. He was on a platform, as though in a *madrasa*, and was teaching the people there the system of law (*madhhab*). I sat down beside him. I saw a man come up to him and ask him about God's generosity; he cited a verse which described in a quite general manner God's generosity towards His servants. Then I said to him: "I myself have composed a verse on this subject in a poem". But however hard I tried to remember it, I was simply unable. I then said to him: "God has in this very instant sent me something on the subject". He replied: "Speak!" God then made me say some verses which I had never heard before . . .. He [i.e. ᶜIzz al-Dīn] listened to me with a smile. Just at that moment the *qāḍī* Shams al-Dīn Shirāzī passed by.[43] When he saw me he dismounted and first of all went and sat down near ᶜIzz al-Dīn, then came close to me and said: "I would like you to kiss me on the mouth!" He held me forcefully against him and I kissed him on the mouth. ᶜIzz al-Dīn asked me: "What does that signify?" I replied to him: "I am in a vision and I am kissing him because he has asked me to; and what is more, he is a person who has a good opinion of me. He has become conscious of his errors and his sins, and he knows that his end is near".'[44]

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Regardless of whether they were opponents or supporters of Ibn ᶜArabī's school, and regardless of whether they were contemporaries of Ibn ᶜArabī or writing at a later period, all our compilers are agreed on at least one point: the good will, friendship and protection offered him by the powerful family of the Banū Zakī. No doubt we have here one of the factors that encouraged the Shaikh al-Akbar to settle in Damascus (rather than in Aleppo, where his disciple Ibn Sawdakīn was living) and which enabled him to pursue his teaching in complete tranquillity, undisturbed by the religious authorities. The Banū Zakī constituted a veritable dynasty of grand *qāḍīs*, with no less than seven of them occupying the post between the sixth and seventh century.[45] We no longer know exactly when Ibn ᶜArabī established links with the family; but he was almost certainly acquainted with Zakī al-Dīn Ṭāhir Ibn Zakī (*d.* 617/1220), who twice held the post of grand *qāḍī*, firstly from 598 to

43. Shams al-Dīn Shirāzī was *qāḍī* in 631 and died in 636H: cf. *Tarājim*, p.166.
44. *Dīwān*, p.256.
45. For the Banū Zakī cf. Pouzet, *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, I, pp.24, 43, 44, 72, etc.

612 and then again from 614 to 616.[46] This ill-fated *qāḍī* died in 617 after suffering terrible harassment at the hands of Sultan Muᶜaẓẓam for sheltering Shaikh ᶜAtīq al-Lawrāqī,[47] whom Ibn ᶜArabī tells us he met in Damascus[48]—a meeting which must have taken place either in 616 or at the very latest in 617, the year of ᶜAtīq's death. It is rather remarkable that Zakī al-Dīn's brother, Muḥyī l-Dīn, chose in turn to offer protection to another Andalusian Sufi in the person of Ibn ᶜArabī. Before examining more closely the relationship between the Shaikh al-Akbar and Muḥyī l-Dīn b. Zakī (*d.* 668/1270), it is worth noting that this man's name is linked with one of the most tragic incidents in the history of Damascus. At the time of the Mongol invasion in 658/1260 it was he who—along with the *qāḍī* Ṣadr al-Dīn b. Sanī al-Dawla—was selected to go to Hulagu to ask for security (*amān*); Hulagu immediately nominated him grand *qāḍī* over all the 'territory extending from Qinnasrīn to al-ᶜArīsh'.[49] Abū Shāma criticises him violently for his attitude during the course of these events, accusing him of taking advantage of the circumstances to monopolise all the *madrasas*. 'At this point in time the *qāḍī* [Ibn Zakī] started monopolising affairs for himself, his children and his friends. He allocated either to himself or to them the majority of *madrasas*, for example the ᶜAdhrawiyya, the Sulṭāniyya, the Fulkiyya, the Rukyniyya, the Qaymariyya and the Kallasa, which he took from Shams al-Dīn al-Kurdī, just as he took from him the Ṣāliḥiyya *madrasa* and gave it to ᶜImād al-Dīn Ibn al-ᶜArabī . . .. He did all this while everyone was perfectly aware that he had acted unjustly towards the jurists [who taught] in the two *madrasas* that were already in his possession: the ᶜAzīziyya and the Taqwiyya. He also gave his son ᶜĪsā control of the Sufi *khānqāhs*, and chose his uterine brother to assist him in the magistracy . . ..'[50] It will be noted in passing that on this occasion Muḥyī l-Dīn b. Zakī took care of Ibn ᶜArabī's elder brother, ᶜImād al-Dīn. What Abū Shāma does not say is that Ibn Zakī was also suspected of being a sympathiser with the Shīᶜites. Several authors,[51] on the basis of two verses he once wrote, assert that 'he preferred ᶜAlī to ᶜUthmān'—even though, as Ibn al-ᶜImād points out, he claimed to be a descendant of ᶜUthmān.[52] There is obviously a considerable temptation here to postulate a compromising link for Ibn ᶜArabī between Muḥyī l-Dīn b. Zakī's 'pro-Shīᶜism' and the friendship

46. *Tarājim*, p.118; Pouzet, *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, I, pp.130–1.
47. For Shaikh ᶜAtīq cf. Ṣafī al-Dīn, *Risāla*, pp.118–23.
48. *Durra*, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.160.
49. For Muḥyī l-Dīn b. Zakī cf. Pouzet, *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, I, p.340.
50. *Tarājim*, pp.205–6.
51. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, XIII, p.258; *Shadharāt*, II, pp.327–28.
52. Cf. *Shadharāt*, loc. cit., and for the Banū Zakī's claims to be descendants of Caliph ᶜUthmān, *Tarājim*, p.31.

that existed between the two men. This is precisely what Yūnīnī does, declaring that 'in this respect he was in agreement with his shaikh Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn ᶜArabī'.[53] But, as we have already seen, Ibn ᶜArabī's own writings, which are the most dependable source of evidence for the matter, refute any suggestion of Shīᶜite tendencies on his part.

Ibn ᶜArabī's connections with the Banū Zakī are referred to by a good number of authorities. There is no need to rely on Fayrūzābādī for the information that the Shaikh al-Akbar was buried in their *turbe*: the detail is already mentioned by Abū Shāma, who attended his funeral.[54] Yūnīnī (*d.* 726/1326) even specifies that Ibn ᶜArabī died in the home of the *qāḍī* Muḥyī l-Dīn b. Zakī (at the time he did not yet hold the post of *qāḍī*), and that it was he who with the assistance of two other people washed the body of the deceased.[55] Maqqarī adds the further information (although without stating his sources) that Muḥyī l-Dīn b. Zakī used to give Ibn ᶜArabī thirty dirhams each day[56]—which is exactly the same sum he was given by the *qāḍī* Khuwayy according to al-Qārī al-Baghdādī. Finally, the son of the Emir ᶜAbd al-Qādir states in his *Tuḥfat al-zā'ir*[57] that Ibn ᶜArabī married a girl from the Banū Zakī. Obviously it is impossible to verify assertions of this kind, originating as they do from such late writers, but two facts must be mentioned which all our sources appear to have been unaware of. Firstly, three reading certificates prove that Ibn Zakī attended the reading of several chapters from the *Futūḥāt* in 633 at Damascus.[58] Secondly, various passages in the *Nafaḥāt ilāhiyya*[59] testify to the fact that Ibn Zakī remained in close contact with the 'Akbarian' circle after Ibn ᶜArabī's death—and especially with the shaikh's two sons and his stepson Qūnawī.

While this means we are fairly well informed regarding Ibn ᶜArabī's relations with the *ᶜulamā'* at Damascus, for the sake of completeness it should also be added that he had connections with another less well-known jurist as well: Zayn al-Dīn Yūsuf al-Kurdī (*d.* 643/1245),[60] who according to Ibn ᶜArabī was one of the few men who observed the Sunna of the two supererogatory *rakᶜa* before the sunset prayer.[61] All in all, then, even if we

53. *Bidāya*, XIII, p.258.
54. *Tarājim*, p.170.
55. Cf. *Wāfī*, IV, p.175; *Fawāt*, III, p.436.
56. *Nafḥ*, II, p.166.
57. *Tuḥfat al-zā'ir*, Damascus 1963, p.597.
58. R.G. § 135, *samāᶜ* §§ 49, 50, 51, 53. He is referred to here by his full name—Yaḥyā b. M. b. ᶜAlī al-Qurashī—and is also accompanied by one of his sons, called Mūsā.
59. Qūnawī, *Nafaḥāt ilāhiyya*, MS. Bibliotheque Nationale 1354, ff^{os} 110–1, 113, 114–14b, 115–15b, 118b-120.
60. For further details about him see *Tarājim*, p.177.
61. *Fut.*, I, p.492.

leave aside the dubious testimony of writers such as Fayrūzābādī or Qārī Baghdādī whose boundless love and veneration for Ibn ᶜArabī meant that they quite blatantly distorted history in his favour, a clear picture emerges. Ibn ᶜArabī's teaching may not necessarily have been identical for all his audiences but it was certainly not carried on in secret, as is clear from the number of listeners (approximately a hundred and fifty) recorded in the *samāᶜ*s which were issued between 620 and 638; and this teaching apparently provoked neither polemics nor attacks on the part of the *fuqahā'*, who for the most part held the Shaikh al-Akbar in high esteem. When one thinks of what happened later—of the ruthless war triggered off against him, his doctrine and his supporters less than half a century later by men such as Ibn Taymiyya and Quṭb al-Dīn Qasṭallānī—one is forced to conclude that while still alive Ibn ᶜArabī remained above all possible suspicion by virtue of a mode of existence and lifestyle which were in the strictest conformity with the *sharīᶜa*.

On the other hand, we are much less well informed regarding Ibn ᶜArabī's relations with Sufi circles in Damascus. For example, did he know Shaikh Ḥarrālī? And what were his links with, or his attitude towards, the Ḥarīriyya who became the talk of the town when their master was imprisoned in 628? In the present stage of research no answers to these questions can be given. We do, however, know that he met ᶜAfīf al-Dīn Tilimsānī during this man's visit to Damascus in 634. A native of the Tlemcen region,[62] ᶜAfīf al-Dīn left for the East while still a young man and travelled to Anatolia, where he is said to have performed forty retreats (*khalwa*).[63] There he met Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī and became his disciple;[64] and it was Qūnawī who in 634 took him to see the Shaikh al-Akbar in Damascus—as is proved by the twelfth *samāᶜ* of the *Futūḥāt*, where both men are mentioned. It was also through Qūnawī as intermediary that he made the acquaintance of Ibn Sabᶜīn in Egypt some years later. 'When Tilimsānī's shaikh, Qūnawī, arrived on a mission (*rasūlan*) in Egypt, he met Ibn Sabᶜīn who had just arrived from the Maghreb. Tilimsānī was accompanied by his master. Ibn Sabᶜīn was subsequently asked: "How did you find Qūnawī?" He replied: "He is one of the men of spiritual realisation (*min al-muḥaqqiqīn*), but there is a young man with him who is

62. *'Kūmī al-aṣl'*, according to Ziriklī's correction (*al-Aᶜlām*, 6th edition, Beirut 1984, III, p.130), and not *kūfī* as we find the word spelt in many other authors. For ᶜAfīf al-Dīn Tilimsānī cf. *Wāfī*, XV, pp.408–13; Ibn Suqāᶜī, *Tālī al-wafayāt*, ed. and trans. J. Sublet, Damascus, I.F.D., 1974, § 122, pp.105–6; *Shadharāt*, V, pp.412–13; P. Nwyia, 'Une cible d'Ibn Taymiyya: le moniste al-Tilimsānī', *B.E.O.*, 1978, XXX, pp.127ff.
63. *Wāfī*, XV, p.408.
64. cf. W. Chittick, 'The Last Will and Testament', p.53.

wiser than he!".'[65] This meeting took place some time between 648—the approximate date of Ibn Sabʿīn's arrival in Egypt—and 652, which is when he departed for good to Mecca. The encounter with Ibn Sabʿīn was to be followed by others, because Tilimsānī became his son-in-law and disciple.[66] The author of commentaries on Ibn ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Niffarī's *Mawāqif* and Shaikh al-Harawī's *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, and of a *Dīwān*, ʿAfīf al-Dīn Tilimsānī was the one person among the *'ittiḥādiyyūn'* who was held in the greatest contempt by the jurists: the most pernicious of the lot, and the most excessive in his impiety', according to Ibn Taymiyya,[67] and 'pigs' meat on a China plate', as he was described even more crudely by another writer.[68] The 'China plate' here is doubtless a reference to Tilimsānī's poetic talent, which was acknowledged by all—even by Ibn Taymiyya.

We also happen to know that Ibn ʿArabī was acquainted with three 'madmen of God' (*muwallahūn*) in Damascus: Masʿūd al-Ḥabashī (*d.* 602/1205),[69] who—as he tells us in the *Futūḥāt*[70]—was dominated by 'stupefaction' (*buht*); Yaʿqūb al-Kūrānī, a rather sad madman whom he met at the White Bridge;[71] and the famous ʿAlī al-Kurdī (*d.* 622/1225) 'regarding whom', as Abū Shāma explains, 'the people of Damascus were of different opinions—some said he performed miracles, others denied it and retorted that no one had ever seen him pray, fast, or wear sandals'.[72] Ṣafī al-Dīn Ibn Abī Manṣūr, who as a young man met him in Damascus, states that 'he presided over the inhabitants of Damascus like a master over his household', and he goes on to give a detailed description of the meeting that took place between ʿAlī al-Kurdī and Suhrawardī.[73] In the *Futūḥāt* Ibn ʿArabī only refers very briefly to his encounter with this 'divine madman',[74] but he must have visited him often because he also composed a short work in which he explained and reformulated the madman's sayings.[75] Finally, at the end of the tenth volume of the *Futūḥāt* Ibn ʿArabī discloses that at Damascus he met up again with four men he had known in Andalusia who (although he had

65. *Shadharāt*, V, p.412.
66. *al-Qawl al-munbī*, f° 97.
67. *Majmuʿāt al-rasā'il al-kubrā*, I, pp.177–78.
68. *Shadharāt*, V, p.412.
69. Cf. *Tarājim*, p.54.
70. *Fut.*, I, p.250.
71. *Fut.*, I, pp.249–50. This bridge, which spanned the river Tawra, no longer survives, but the quarter that bears its name still exists.
72. *Tarājim*, p.146.
73. *Risāla*, pp.123–25.
74. *Fut.*, II, p.522.
75. The work in question is the *Kitāb al-ajwiba al-ʿarabiyya fī sharḥ al-nasā'iḥ al-yūsufiyya*, also entitled *Sharḥ rūḥiyyat al-shaykh ʿAlī al-Kurdī*. Cf. *Histoire et classification*, R.G. § 9.

been unaware of the fact at the time) were the four 'men of reverential Fear and Majesty' (*rijāl al-hayba wa l-jalāl*). 'It is they who assist the [four] Pillars. Their hearts are celestial; they are ignored on earth, known in the heavens . . .. One of them is on the heart of Muḥammad, the second on the heart of Shuʿayb, the third on the heart of Ṣāliḥ, the fourth on the heart of Hūd . . .. The adoration of the universe is united in these four men . . .. I met them in Damascus and realised that they were these four men; I had known them earlier in Andalusia, but then I was unaware that they possessed this station and I mistook them for simple believers.'[76]

THE MEETING OF THE TWO SEALS

AFTER criss-crossing the East for a period of twenty years Ibn ʿArabī—now aged sixty—decided to settle in Syria. As to why he chose the land of Shām in preference to Egypt, which so many other émigrés from the Maghreb, including a good number of Sufis, had decided to make their home, nowhere does he provide us with an answer—except in the 'Chapter of Recommendations' in the *Futūḥāt*.[77] There he specifically states: 'Live in the land of Shām if you are able, because it has been established that the Messenger of God said "Take care of the land of Shām because it is the land for which God has shown His preference, and it is from there that He selects the élite of His servants".'[78] No doubt it was his intention to apply this precept to himself. On the other hand, he seems not to have found in Cairo the sanctuary he hoped for; at any rate it is noticeable that not a single remark either in his own works or in his biographers suggests that he made any friends there; Ḥarīrī and his brother are of course an exception, but he had known them since his childhood in Andalusia. In this respect it is interesting that according to Ghubrīnī's anecdote—fabrication though it appears to be—Egypt is where Ibn ʿArabī was condemned to death by the *fuqahā'*. By way of contrast, as we saw in the last chapter the Shaikh al-Akbar established a large number of contacts in Syria, and this seems to have made it a more receptive and favourable environment for the pursuit of his mission. This was true of Damascus, where the Banū Zakī kept a watchful eye over him; but it was also true of Aleppo, where until 613 he enjoyed the protection and friendship of King Ẓāhir.[79]

76. *Fut.*, II, pp.12–13.
77. *Fut.*, IV, p.500.
78. Ibn Ḥanbal, IV, p.110; Abū Dāwūd, *jihād*, p.553.
79. See above, chapter 8, and to the references given there add *Fut.*, III, pp.69–70, where Ibn ʿArabī reports a conversation he had with the king of Aleppo regarding a jurist who had issued a

Due emphasis must also be laid on the fact that it was in Aleppo—where he stayed no less than six times between 600 and 618[80]—that the 'fourteen apostles' emerged for the first time. The names of this group of fourteen apparently inseparable disciples feature together in around thirty *samāᶜs* of Ibn ᶜArabī's works—one of them issued in Aleppo in 617, the others at Damascus in 633. Their names are as follows:

ᶜAbd al-ᶜAziz al-Jabbāb
ᶜAlī b. Muẓaffar al-Nushbī
Ḥusayn b. Ibr. al-Irbīlī
Ḥusayn b. M. al-Mawṣilī
Ibrāhīm b. M. b. M. al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭūbī[81]
Ibrāhīm b. ᶜUmar al-Qurashī
ᶜĪsā b. Isḥāq al-Hudhbānī
Ismāᶜīl b. Sawdakīn
Muḥammad b. A. al-Mayūrqī
Muḥammad b. Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn ᶜArabī
Muḥammad b. Saᶜd al-Dīn al-Muᶜazẓamī
Naṣr Allāh b. Abī l-ᶜIzz al-Shaybānī Ibn al-Ṣaffār
Yaᶜqūb b. Muᶜādh al-Warabī
Yūnus b. ᶜUthmān al-Dimashqī.

Three of the names in this list are immediately recognisable. There is Ibn Sawdakīn; Muḥammad al-Muᶜazẓamī, who had come into contact with Ibn ᶜArabī in 615 at Malatya and had become his son-in-law; and also one of Ibn ᶜArabī's two sons. The Muḥammad in question must have been the older son, Muḥammad ᶜImād al-Dīn (*d.* 667/1269), because Muḥammad Saᶜd al-Dīn, the younger of the two, had not yet been born; it will be recalled that Ibn ᶜArabī was to dedicate the first draft of the *Futūḥāt* to this elder son of his in 629.[82]

Reference to various biographical repertories has also made it possible to unearth the *curricula vitae* of four other members of this group. ᶜAlī b. Muẓaffar al-Nushbī (*d.* 656/1258) was a *muḥaddith* in Damascus, and he must have had a sizeable reputation because he is mentioned in Dimyāṭī's

fatwā authorising the king to perform (and so discharge) the fast of Ramaḍān at any time in the year he chose!

80. A passage in the *Futūḥāt* (III, p.49) implies that Ibn ᶜArabī had a house in Aleppo where he hosted a certain Sulaymān al-Khābūrī, who transmitted to him some *ḥadīths*. For details of Ibn ᶜArabī's stays in Aleppo see the chronological table of his life in Appendix 1.

81. Ibn ᶜArabī refers to him in *Fut.*, II, p.637.

82. For ᶜImād al-Dīn b. Muḥyī l-Dīn b. ᶜArabī cf. *Wāfī*, II, p.193; *Nafḥ*, II, p.170.

Dictionary of Authorities[83] and Dhahabī's *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*;[84] we are also told by Abū Shāma[85] that he acted as assistant to the *qāḍī* Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Bakrī in the enforcement of moral and religious precepts (*ḥisba*). According to the author of the *Shadharāt al-dhahab*,[86] Ḥusayn al-Irbīlī was a philologist who had emigrated to Damascus from Irbil; he too is mentioned in Dimyāṭī's *Dictionary*.[87] Ibrāhīm b. ᶜUmar al-Qurashī belonged to one of Damascus' noble families because his mother was the daughter of the grand *qāḍī* Muḥyī l-Dīn Muḥammad b. ᶜAlī (*d.* 599/1202), a member of the Banū Zakī. He was one of Damascus' *muᶜaddils*, or witnesses on oath, and there he pursued his profession as calligraphist. According to Abū Shāma[88] his writing was elegant, and during his time most bindings were produced by him. On the other hand, the same writer passes a far more severe judgement on Ibn al-Ṣaffār[89] (also known as Ibn Shuqayshiqa)—so severe in fact that one suspects he held some personal grudge against the man, whom he describes as 'a dubious and false witness, a man with little religion in him, and many other things to boot'. But Ibn al-ᶜImād[90] rallies to his defence, describing him as an 'erudite and intelligent man' and also noting that he bequeathed his own home to be converted into a *dār al-ḥadīth*.

It will be noted that all these people lived in Damascus, not Aleppo. This was probably also true of the seven other men about whom no information seems to have survived, because they all feature in around thirty certificates issued by Ibn ᶜArabī at Damascus in 633.[91] It was therefore no accident that brought them all together at Aleppo in 617 to attend a reading of the *Kitāb al-mīm wa l-nūn wa l-wāw*[92] in the presence of the author; no doubt they had already become acquainted with Ibn ᶜArabī during one of his previous stays in Damascus.

Of the jurists in Aleppo, two at least were devoted to Ibn ᶜArabī. One of them was called Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Shānī al-Mawṣilī (*d.* 631/1233) and

83. Dimyāṭī, *Dictionary of Authorities*, p.75.

84. *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ*, Hyderabad 1958, IV, p.1438.

85. *Tarājim*, p.199.

86. *Shadharāt*, V, p.274.

87. Dimyāṭī, p.93. Cf. also Yūnīnī, *Dhayl mir'āt al-zamān*, Hyderabad 1954, I, p.125.

88. *Tarājim*, pp.232–33; cf. also *Shadharāt*, V, p.312.

89. *Tarājim*, p.201.

90. *Shadharāt*, V, p.285, where he cites some verses on the *mīm*, *nūn* and *wāw* which were attributed to Ibn Ṣaffār.

91. They are all mentioned in approx. 30 *samāᶜs* for the *Futūḥāt*, all dated 633, and in *samāᶜ* § 2 for the *Kitāb ayyām al-sha'n* (R.G. § 67), *samāᶜ* § 3 for the *Kitāb maqām al-qurba* (R.G. § 414) and *samāᶜ* § 3 for the *Tāj al-rasā'il* (R.G. § 736).

92. R.G. § 462, *samāᶜ* § 1.

taught at the Sayf al-Dīn b. Ghulām al-Dīn *madrasa*.[93] It was he who recommended to Ibn ᶜArabī a man who had attained to the '*maqām al-ᶜaẓama*' or 'Abode of Magnificence'—an abode where, according to Ibn ᶜArabī, the universe no longer contains the believer but the believer's heart contains God. In the *Futūḥāt* he writes:[94] 'I have met nobody who belongs to this category with the exception of one man from Mosul who had attained to the station. However, he was faced with a complex problem and was unable to find anyone who could resolve it for him. The jurist Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Shānī al-Mawṣilī, who had faith in me, brought the man to see me. He explained his problem to me and I freed him from it; he found contentment and relief. I took him as my companion while he was in this station and I tried without ceasing to raise him to a station that was higher.'

The other jurist was none other than Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-ᶜAdīm[95] (*d.* 660/1262), the author of two histories of Aleppo which is where he held the post of *qāḍī* and then the post of vizier under the kings ᶜAzīz (*d.* 634/1236) and Nāṣir (*d.* 658/1260). This was the man instructed by Ibn ᶜArabī to give a reading of the *Dhakhā'ir al-aᶜlāq* in front of a gathering of Aleppo jurists.[96] As we saw earlier, the *Dhakhā'ir* is the commentary Ibn ᶜArabī wrote on his *Tarjumān* in Aleppo in 611 at the request of Ibn Sawdakīn and Ḥabashī, who had heard some jurists make malicious remarks about this collection of poems.[97]

Ibn ᶜArabī was probably also in contact with the grand *qāḍī* of Aleppo, Bahā' al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād (*d.* 633/1235), and his successor Ibn al-Ustādh (*d.* 636/1238); at any rate he had an encounter with them during the course of a rather strange vision.[98] But it was not quite as strange—and certainly not as significant—as another vision he had in Aleppo, during which he was given the sura *al-Ikhlāṣ*. 'This sura epiphanised itself to me in the city of Aleppo. When I saw it I was told: "Neither man nor *jinn* has ever sullied this sura" (Qur'ān 55:56). I observed in it and proceeding from it a great sympathy (*maylan ᶜaẓīman*) towards me. It had already showed itself to me in an Abode that was almost identical to the one where I now was. I was told again: "It is yours to the exclusion of all other believers" (*hiya khāliṣa laka min dūni l-mu'minīn*). In that moment I understood the allusion and realised that it was my essence, the essence of my form, none other than my very self.'[99]

93. *Fut.*, IV, p.83. For further details about the man cf. D. Sourdel, 'Les professeurs de madrasa à Alep', *B.E.O.*, 1949–1951, XIII, p.90.
94. *Fut.*, III, p.225; cf. also IV, pp.83, 241.
95. Cf. *EI²* s.v. Ibn al-ᶜAdīm.
96. *Dhakhā'ir*, Cairo 1968, p.4.
97. Ibid.
98. *Fut.*, II, p.416.
99. *Fut.*, III, p.181.

It was finally Damascus—'refuge of the prophets' (*ma'wā al-anbiyā'*), where it is said Jesus will descend again to earth at the end of time[100]—that Ibn ᶜArabī chose as his place of residence from 620/1223 onwards. According to the *Tarājim*[101] his home was in the vicinity of the Rawāḥiyya *madrasa*, not far from Bāb al-Farādīs in north Damascus. The same source of information also tells us that he became caught up in a scandal which flared up over this *madrasa* after the death of its founder, Ibn Rawāḥa. When the man died in 623, Ibn ᶜArabī announced—or 'pretended', to use Abū Shāma's own word—that Ibn Rawāḥa, a rich merchant who was one of Damascus' 'witnesses on oath' (ᶜ*udūl*), had had him come round one evening along with Shaikh Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Khazᶜal and had called them to witness that he was withdrawing control of the *madrasa* from the hands of Ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī; this, as Abū Shāma goes on to say, gave rise to endless controversy.

The house where Ibn ᶜArabī lived was doubtless the home of the Banū Zakī. According to Yūnīnī[102] this is where he died; it was also to give shelter for a while—some six centuries later—to the Emir ᶜAbd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī.[103] It will be remembered in this connection that Ibn ᶜArabī refused all possessions,[104] and that his only means of subsistence were the gifts he was given—gifts which would seem to have been quite substantial because according to the *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*[105] the ruler of Homs[106] granted him a daily pension of a hundred dirhams while Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn Zakī and Khuwayy the *qāḍī* gave him thirty dirhams per day. Certainly these details, coming as they do from a fervent supporter of Ibn ᶜArabī, are subject to caution; but we must also not forget that according to the entirely credible testimony of Ibn Jubayr patronage was a common occurrence in Damascus. 'Any person from our Maghreb who is seeking peace of soul has only to emigrate to this place [i.e. Damascus] and devote himself there to the search for knowledge and he will find many favourable circumstances, starting with the end of all concern for his subsistence—which is the greatest and most essential of all aids.'[107] Admittedly Maqqarī adds that the Shaikh al-Akbar redistributed everything

100. For the traditions relating to Damascus cf. Yāqūt, *Muᶜjam*, II, pp.463–70; also *EI²* s.v. Dimashq.
101. *Tarājim*, p.149.
102. *Wāfī*, IV, p.175.
103. *Tuḥfat al-zā'ir*, p.597.
104. See above, chapter 2.
105. *Nafḥ*, II, p.166.
106. The man in question is Mujāhid Shīrkūh, who ruled over Homs from 581/1184 to 637/1239.
107. Ibn Jubayr, *Voyages*, p.332.

that he received in alms, but he must have kept part of it to help meet the needs of his family. At the time he would seem to have had at least two wives: Fāṭima bint Yūnus, whom he mentions in the very last lines of the *Futūḥāt*,[108] and Maryam bint Muḥammad b. ᶜAbdūn, whom we know from a certificate for the *Naẓm al-futūḥ* to have still been alive in 630.[109] We also know that he then had two sons: ᶜImād al-Dīn Muḥammad, Fāṭima's son,[110] being the elder, and Saᶜd al-Dīn Muḥammad who had been born in Malatya in 618. Ibn ᶜArabī also refers in the *Futūḥāt*[111] to his daughter Zaynab, who even as a small baby was capable of pronouncing *fatwās*. 'One day I started questioning my daughter Zaynab in jest—she was only about a year old and still at her mother's breast—and I asked her: "When a man has intercourse with a woman without emitting sperm, what must he do?" She replied, "He must perform the great ablution (*ghusl*)", to the amazement of everyone present.' Apart from this passage we also have Ibn ᶜArabī's description in his *Dīwān*[112] of the terrible moment when he consigned his daughter to the earth with his own hands. He does not mention her first name, so we cannot be sure whether or not the daughter in question was Zaynab or precisely when he was afflicted by the bereavement. But, these details aside, his home was certainly large enough to accommodate more than thirty disciples at a time, when they gathered to attend the reading of his works.[113] Other Damascenes had started to swell the number of the fourteen disciples who had gathered at Aleppo in 617. The first fifty-seven certificates for the *Futūḥāt* which Ibn ᶜArabī issued between 633 and 638[114] contain no less than a hundred and twenty names; and to them we must add the names of a further small number of hearers recorded in the other certificates dating from the Damascus period (620–638). Around twenty of these hearers are familiar to us. Apart from the 'fourteen apostles' we find Qūnawī, who was reunited with his master at Damascus in 626;[115] Tilimsānī, who attended a reading of the *Futūḥāt* in

108. *Fut.*, IV, p.554. Ibn ᶜArabī does not add the *taraḥḥum* formula after mentioning her name, which would suggest that at the time when he wrote these final lines of the *Futūḥāt*, in around 636, his wife Fāṭima was still alive.

109. *Naẓm al-futūḥ al-makkī*, MS. Aḥmadiyya (information courtesy of Dr Riyāḍ al-Māliḥ).

110. *Fut.*, IV, p.554.

111. *Fut.*, IV, p.117.

112. *Dīwān*, p.340.

113. This is proved by a good number of *samāᶜ*s for the *Futūḥāt* which specify that the reading in question took place 'in the house of the author at Damascus'. Cf. R.G. § 135, and e.g. *samāᶜ*s §§ 35, 36, 37 and 39.

114. The *samāᶜ*s numbered between 58 and 71 were handed out after Ibn ᶜArabī's death by his two disciples Ibn Sawdakīn and Qūnawī.

115. Cf. *Kitāb al-ᶜabādila* (R.G. § 2), *samāᶜ*s §§ 1–2.

634;[116] Aḥmad al-Mawṣilī's two daughters Umm Raslān and Umm Dalāl;[117] and Ibn ᶜArabī's younger son Saᶜd al-Dīn Muḥammad.[118] As for the other hearers, naturally one's attention is drawn to those whose names reappear with significant frequency or in different years and who on this basis can be considered to have been regular disciples. Around thirty people fall into this category. One of the names worth noting is Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad al-Balkhī: he attended the reading of the *Kitāb al-tajalliyāt* in 620, the reading of the *Kitāb al-ᶜabādila* in 626, twenty-seven readings of the *Futūḥāt* in 633 and, finally, the reading of the *Kitāb al-tanazzulāt al-mawṣiliyya* in 634.[119] Even more interesting is the case of Ayyūb b. Badr b. Manṣūr al-Muqri', whom Sakhāwī includes in his list of *ittiḥādiyyūn*[120] on the basis of a perfectly accurate remark by Dhahabī to the effect that he had copied a good number of Ibn ᶜArabī works.[121] His name also occurs for the first time in 620, alongside Abū Bakr al-Balkhī's in the first of the *samāᶜ*s for the *Tajalliyāt*;[122] it then recurs in the following year in eight certificates for a variety of works,[123] each time accompanied by the names of only two other hearers, Ibrāhīm b. ᶜUmar al-Qurashī (one of the 'fourteen') and a certain Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī (not to be confused with Ibrāhīm b. M. b. M. al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī); his name crops up again in 626 in a certificate for the *Kitāb al-ᶜabādila*,[124] and then again in 638[125] in a *samāᶜ* for the *Tanazzulāt* issued by Ibn ᶜArabī on the 10th of Rabīᶜ I—that is, just over a month before the Shaikh al-Akbar's death—where he features simultaneously as reader, writer and one and only hearer.

Also distinguishable in this group are veritable dynasties of hearers: the record was held by the Ḥamawīs, who kept up their attendance for three generations. The eldest of them was Abū Bakr b. Sulaymān al-Ḥamawī, who held the post of preacher (*wāᶜiẓ*) in one of the mosques of Damascus and died in 649/1251 at the age of ninety;[126] his name features in thirty-three *samāᶜ*s

116. R.G. § 135, *samāᶜ* § 12.

117. R.G. § 135, *samāᶜ*s §§ 21, 29, 34, 38, 44.

118. Cf. R.G. § 67, *samāᶜ* § 2; R.G. § 414, *samāᶜ* § 3; R.G. § 736, *samāᶜ* § 3, and many of the *samāᶜ*s for the *Futūḥāt* dating from 633. Saᶜd al-Dīn died at Damascus in 656, leaving an important poetic work (cf. Kaḥḥāla, XI, p.248). For details about him cf. *Wāfī*, I, p.186; *Fawāt*, V, p.158; *Tarājim*, p.200; *Shadharāt*, V, p.283; and esp. *Nafḥ*, II, p.170.

119. R.G. §§ 2, 135, 738, 762.

120. *al-Qawl al-munbī*, f° 28b.

121. He is indeed cited as 'writer' in a substantial number of the *samāᶜ*s.

122. Cf. R.G. § 738.

123. Cf. R.G. §§ 26, 33, 219, 317, 386, 418, 551, 689.

124. R.G. § 2.

125. R.G. § 762.

126. For information about him cf. *Tarājim*, p.187; Dimyāṭī, *Dictionary*, p.80.

for the *Futūḥāt*, all of them during the year 633, and more often than not he is accompanied by his two sons Aḥmad and ᶜAbd al-Wāḥīd. The first of these sons, Aḥmad, was born in around 600, died in 687, and is accused by the author of the *Wāfī* of being a hypocrite: 'He concealed what he was by passing himself off as an ascetic until the day arrived when he testified against the *qāḍī* Ibn Ṣā'igh. He was accused of lying but he persisted in his testimony'.[127] The second son, ᶜAbd al-Wāḥid, was a preacher like his father, and he died in 658.[128] His own son, Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Wāḥid al-Ḥamawī, appears alongside his father and grandfather in seventeen of the *samāᶜ*s for the *Futūḥāt*.[129] Similarly, two generations of Birzālīs are recorded in the certificates for the *Futūḥāt*. The father, Muḥammad b. Yūsuf (*d.* 636/1238), was the first of the Banū Birzāl to come and settle in Damascus; he taught *ḥadīth* there and held the post of imām.[130] His name occurs in nine *samāᶜ*s for the *Futūḥāt*, and also in certificates for the *Ayyām al-sha'n*, *Tāj al-rasā'il* and *Kitāb maqām al-qurba*;[131] the name of his son, Aḥmad, in three *samāᶜ*s for the *Futūḥāt* during the year 633.

Finally, one notes the mention of the three Muḥammad Ibn al-Ṣā'igh brothers in a dozen or so *samāᶜ*s for the *Futūḥāt*. One of them was ᶜImād al-Dīn (*d.* 674/1275), who was a teacher at both the ᶜAdhrawiyya and Khaḍiriyya *madrasas*;[132] his name is included in the list of the 'irreligious' drawn up by Sakhāwī,[133] who once again is basing what he says on comments by Dhahabī. The two other brothers were probably ᶜAlā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-Ṣā'igh (*d.* 682/1283), who taught at the Fatḥiyya *madrasa*,[134] and ᶜIzz al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-Ṣā'igh, the most famous of the three brothers, who held the post of grand *qāḍī* from 669 to 678 and again from 680 to 682[135] and, as we have seen, became embroiled in a conflict with another of Ibn ᶜArabī's disciples, Aḥmad al-Ḥamawī. However, it must also be noted that according to the *Wāfī* ᶜIzz al-Dīn was born in 628 and will therefore only have been five years old at the time of the readings from the *Futūḥāt* in 633—unless, that is, there is a fourth Muḥammad Ibn al-Ṣā'igh involved. On the

127. *Wāfī*, VI, pp.269–70.

128. *Tarājim*, p.206; Dimyāṭī, *Dictionary*, p.59.

129. He was doubtless very young at the time but, as we will see, he was by no means the only child present at readings from the *Futūḥāt*. The presence of children at reading sessions was in fact a common occurrence: cf. Vajda, *La transmission du savoir*, pp.4–5.

130. For Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Birzālī cf. *Tarājim*, p.168; *Wāfī*, V, p.252; *Shadharāt*, V, p.182.

131. Cf. R.G. § 414, *samāᶜ* § 3; R.G. § 67, *samāᶜ* § 2; R.G. § 736, *samāᶜ* § 3.

132. Pouzet, *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, II, pp.765, 779.

133. *al-Qawl al-munbī*, f° 102b.

134. *Wāfī*, III, p.629.

135. *Wāfī*, III, pp.269–71; *Shadharāt*, V, p.383.

other hand, the same passage in the *Wāfī* reveals that ᶜIzz al-Dīn Ibn al-Ṣā'igh was on close terms with Imād al-Dīn Ibn ᶜArabī, the elder son of the Shaikh al-Akbar; it also reveals that his master was Kamāl al-Dīn Tiflīsī, who was grand *qāḍī* in 658 and according to Qūnawī[136] was also the master of Saᶜd al-Dīn, the younger of Ibn ᶜArabī's sons. And to round off our analysis of this group of regular hearers—many of whom remain completely unknown—it is worth noting the names of Maḥmūd b. ᶜUbayd Allāh al-Zanjānī (*d.* 675/1275), who was also a disciple of Suhrawardī and imām at the Taqwiyya *madrasa*,[137] and of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Takrītī, who is mentioned in twenty-five *samāᶜ*s for the *Futūḥāt* and was to become a preacher in Damascus during the reign of Nāṣir Yūsuf (648/1250–658/1260).[138]

Of those hearers whose names occur irregularly or rarely in the *samāᶜ*s, only two are familiar to us: Mūsā b. Yaḥyā b. M. al-Qurashī,[139] son of the *qāḍī* Ibn Zakī, and Yūsuf b. Dirbās al-Ḥumaydī, nephew of Ibn Sawdakīn[140] and one of the principal members of the Damascus *ḥalqa* (a term which in the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk periods meant a kind of military aristocracy).

This—admittedly partial—examination of the certificates issued by Ibn ᶜArabī between 620 and 638 allows us to draw several conclusions. Firstly, if we leave aside Qūnawī, Tilimsānī and Ibn Sawdakīn who were widely known for their affiliations with Sufism and with the tendency their adversaries denounced under the name of *ittiḥādiyya*, all the other hearers whom we have been able to trace in the various compilations belonged to the circle of *ᶜulamā'* in the broadest sense of this term, and to the circles of religious dignitaries: *qāḍīs*, *khaṭībs*, preachers, imāms, *muḥaddiths* and so on. It is important to emphasise that it was precisely because these men held such positions that they were given a place in these biographical repertories, which by definition were not concerned with the *ᶜāmma*, the ordinary rank and file. This entitles one to suppose that those other hearers who are not mentioned in these compendia were more modest in their social standing. On the other hand, the relatively sizeable number of hearers plus their social background prove that although Ibn ᶜArabī's teaching may have been discreet, it was not really clandestine. Nonetheless, it is probable that he selected his pupils carefully and that they formed a closed circle. One also notes that the reading sessions which attracted the largest number of hearers were for the *Futūḥāt*: certainly Ibn ᶜArabī's major work but also the one

136. Qūnawī, *Nafaḥāt ilāhiyya*, MS. Bibliothèque Nationale 1354, ff^{os} 117b-118b.

137. Cf. *Shadharāt*, V, p.374; Pouzet, *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, I, pp.274–79.

138. Ibn Suqāᶜī, *Tālī*, § 72 (French trans., p.62).

139. R.G. § 135, *samāᶜ*s §§ 49–54.

140. R.G. § 135, *samāᶜ*s §§ 27 and 30, where his kinship with Ibn Sawdakīn is noted. He must have been fairly young because he died in 690/1291.

which was least susceptible to criticism thanks to its sheer size and the diversity of the themes it covers, scattered over thousands of pages. On the other hand, one notes that those writings by Ibn ᶜArabī whose doctrinal, initiatory and metaphysical content are most obvious had a much more limited audience, which no doubt corresponded to the circle of 'initiates'. This is especially true of the *Fuṣūṣ*, the one work of Ibn ᶜArabī's which—as we will soon see—was to trigger attacks from the jurists shortly after his death: we only possess one single *samāᶜ* for it, granted to Qūnawī and Qūnawī alone.[141] Apart from these facts one also notes the existence of three distinct groups within the boundaries of this circle. For example, we have the trio consisting of Ayyūb al-Muqri', Ibrāhīm b. ᶜUmar al-Qurashī and Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, who in 621 attended the reading of a number of works whose titles clearly reveal their doctrinal nature.[142] Then there is the group consisting of the 'fourteen', who in addition to numerous readings devoted to the *Futūḥāt* also attended readings from, for example, the *Kitāb maqām al-qurba*[143] and the *Tāj al-rasā'il*.[144] And finally there is the group of Ibn ᶜArabī's own relatives, which included Ibn Sawdakīn, Qūnawī, his son-in-law Muḥammad al-Muᶜaẓẓamī and his son ᶜImād al-Dīn, who were also joined occasionally by Ayyūb b. Badr al-Muqri' and Abū Bakr al-Balkhī.

However, it would be wrong to restrict the scope of Ibn ᶜArabī's circle of companions to the individuals mentioned in the *samāᶜ*s. In several passages in his works he refers to other disciples of his in Damascus whose names are not to be found in the certificates listed by O. Yahia. That is the case for example with Yaḥyā b. al-Akhfash, who became acquainted with Ibn ᶜArabī through the intermediary of the Prophet. 'There was among us in Damascus a virtuous, cultivated and pious man called Yaḥyā b. al-Akhfash. By origin he was from Marrakech, where his father used to teach Arabic. One day this man wrote to me the following letter from his home in Damascus, which is where I also was myself. "Dear friend, yesterday I saw the Messenger of God in the Great Mosque of Damascus. He was near the preacher's box (*maqṣūrat al-khaṭāba*) which is beside the chest containing the copy of the Qur'ān that is attributed to ᶜUthmān. People were rushing towards him to make the pact. I remained standing, and waited for the crowd to diminish, then I presented myself in front of him and took his hand [to make the pact]. He said to me: 'Do you know Muḥammad?' I asked him which Muḥammad he was referring to.

141. Cf. R.G. § 150.

142. They are the *Kitāb al-alif*, the *Kitāb al-ḥaqq*, *Kitāb nushkhat al-ḥaqq* and *Kitāb shawāhid al-ḥaqq*, the *Risāla al-ittiḥād al-kawnī*, the *Risāla al-anwār*, the *Kitāb mafātīḥ al-ghayb* and the *Kitāb maqṣad al-asmā'*. Cf. R.G. §§ 26, 33, 219, 317, 386, 418, 551, 689.

143. Cf. R.G. § 414.

144. Ibid., § 736.

He replied: 'Ibn al-ᶜArabī'. I answered that, yes indeed, I did know him. He then said to me: 'We have given him an order, so tell him "The Messenger of God bids you carry out the order you have received". As for you: be his companion, you will profit from it. And also tell him: "The Messenger of God asks you to praise the *Anṣār* and Saᶜd b. ᶜUbāda in particular".'[145] Then he called Ḥassān b. Thābit over to us and said to him: 'Ḥassān, teach him a verse which he will transmit to Muḥammad b. al-ᶜArabī, who will then compose his poem' . . .. Afterwards the Messenger of God said to me: 'When he has composed this eulogy of the *Anṣār*, transcribe it in a fine and readable calligraphy and take it on Thursday night to the tomb that you call *qabr al-sitt*. There you will find a man called Ḥāmid; give him the poem' ". As soon as he had related this to me', Ibn ᶜArabī continues, 'I composed this *qaṣīda* on the spot and presented it to him . . ..'[146]

It is not difficult to guess the kind of teaching Ibn ᶜArabī was able to lavish on his companions, especially by using the device of sessions devoted to the reading of his works—occasions which will certainly have given rise to debates, with questions being raised by his disciples and explanations and commentaries given by himself. We can also form a fairly accurate idea of this process of oral elaboration of themes touched on in his writings thanks to the works of Ibn Sawdakīn. As was noted earlier, when this disciple of Ibn ᶜArabī attempts for example to elucidate the *Tajalliyāt*, the *Kitāb al-isrā'* or the *Mashāhid al-asrār*, he emphasises the fact that he is simply transcribing the actual words of his master. Another very valuable document is the *Kitāb wasā'il al-sā'il*,[147] which is a discontinuous series of comments by Ibn ᶜArabī in response to questions addressed to him verbally and written down by Ibn Sawdakīn. The comments are in the form of practical advice expressed in a simple and direct style, and it is easy to believe that one is listening to the actual voice of the Shaikh as he addresses himself to disciples who are not only attentive listeners but genuine *murīd*s who have submitted to his guidance. The man in whom Massignon and others have seen a mere 'grammarian of esotericism' speaks here of the pitfalls of spiritual life in a language dictated by concrete experience. So, for example, he warns against the temptation of excessive involvement in ritual, which runs the risk of giving rise to a dangerous automatism. 'Giving oneself a programme of regular prayers (*awrād*), promising God to set oneself certain tasks, hold to

145. For this companion cf. *EI*¹, IV, p.32. According to Ibn Jubayr (*Voyages*, p.325) his tomb is situated 'four miles to the east of the town'. The *Anṣār* were the Helpers of Muḥammad in Medina.

146. *Fut.*, I, p.267; *Dīwān*, pp.338–39.

147. The text has been edited by Manfred Profitlich (*Die Terminologie Ibn Arabis im 'Kitāb wasā'il al-sā'il'*, Freiburg-im-Breisgau 1973).

certain resolutions and so forth, are things I condemn . . .. Regular prayers are actions that tend to perpetuate themselves through force of habit: actions that a man can perform through his gross nature alone and quite heedlessly, with his mind on other things. But when one does not set oneself fixed prayers but invokes God whenever one can and regardless of the time, so that one invokes Him with presence and application, then—contrary to what happens in the first case—one perceives the effect [of this invocation] due to the concentration of spiritual energy . . ..' Similarly, one finds this supposed representative of an 'intellectual Sufism' denouncing the danger of inappropriate mental activity. The invocator (*dhākir*) ought not to preoccupy himself with the significance of the *dhikr* but simply with the *dhikr* itself. He must make it his sole support, without understanding [in a speculative sense] its meaning, and he must say to himself: "This is an act of worship which has been prescribed for me, and I act in conformity with that order". When the invocator believes this firmly, the *dhikr* operates according to its specific virtue and according to what its essential reality requires.'

It is fair to suppose that this teaching was formulated differently depending on whether he was addressing the small group of 'initiates' or a larger audience of *ʿulamā'*. But this raises the more general question as to the principles and methods Ibn ʿArabī used for *tarbiya* or spiritual training, and also the question as to what he required of his companions. As we have seen, he wrote a vast number of works about the rules of the Path and the points to be observed by the disciple (*adab al-murīd*);[148] but of all these writings it is the longest and most comprehensive chapter in the *Futūḥāt*—the 'Chapter of Recommendations'—which is the best able to provide answers to these questions. The chapter itself is somewhat unexpected: after elaborating in thousands of subtly written pages on his initiatory and metaphysical doctrine Ibn ʿArabī chooses—so as to underline the fact that Sufism engages the whole being and not just the person's intellect—to terminate the work by devoting a hundred or so pages to recalling some of the precepts (in themselves quite elementary) regarding the believer's obligations towards God (*ʿibādāt*) and towards men (*muʿāmalāt*). When one thinks about this choice more carefully one realises that it is in perfect accord with Ibn ʿArabī's convictions and teaching. As he said to his friend Ibn Ṭarīf who was reproaching him for refusing gifts from the sultan, 'The right of God above all else!' (*ḥaqq Allāh aḥaqq*). This must without any doubt have been what the Shaikh al-Akbar taught his disciples in the first instance, because it will be recalled that according to him *sharīʿa* or Islamic law and *ḥaqīqa* or reality are identical, and

148. See above, chapter 6, where various aspects of Ibn ʿArabī's methods of spiritual training (*dhikr, muḥāsaba, samāʿ*) have already been examined.

that all spiritual realisation is attained through strict observance of the Law and scrupulous imitation of the Prophet's Sunna. So it is that in this long final chapter we find him insisting on the fundamental obligations of prayer and ablution while simultaneously demanding of the disciple a permanent state of *ḥuḍūr* or 'presence' with God. For instance, one passage reveals that he persistently advised his disciples never to cut their hair, nails and beard or even take off an article of clothing without being in a state of ablution—because, he explains, everything we own will be called on to testify either for or against us at the Day of Judgement. 'One day I entered the public baths to perform the great ablution (*ghusl*) and there I encountered Najm al-Dīn Abū l-Maʿālī Ibn Lahīb, who was one of my companions. As soon as he called out to the barber to come and shave his head I cried out "Abū l-Maʿālī!". Even before I could get my words out he replied: "I am in a state of purity! I had understood you".'[149] Plainly Ibn ʿArabī had insisted on this point repeatedly in the presence of his disciples.

Of the supererogatory practices that Ibn ʿArabī prescribed for his disciples, two in particular are known to us. One of them was discussed in an earlier chapter: *muḥāsaba*, or the examination of one's conscience, which involves keeping a daily inventory of one's actions and thoughts. The other was the recitation of the *shahāda* seventy thousand times for the salvation of the soul of someone who has died. Regarding this second practice we have several texts at our disposal, the first of which is the *Bāb al-waṣāyā* where Ibn ʿArabī writes: 'I recommend that you purchase your soul for God and preserve yourself from the fire [of hell] by reciting the formula *"lā ilāha illā llāh"* seventy thousand times. Through this practice God will grant you protection from the fire of hell either for yourself or for the person for whom you recite the formula . . .. I have practised it myself and I saw its blessed effect at the time of my wife's death'.[150] A passage in Shaikh ʿAbd al-Ghaffār's *Waḥīd*[151] shows that Ibn ʿArabī did not hesitate to perform the rite for the benefit of his enemies. 'It is related that someone in Damascus had made a rule of cursing Ibn ʿArabī ten times after every prayer. When this person died Ibn ʿArabī attended the funeral along with the other people present. Then, once the burial was over, he went to the house of one of his companions and sat facing in the direction of the *qibla*. When mealtime arrived, the host brought the

149. *Fut.*, IV, pp.445–46.

150. Performing this recitation for the benefit of the dead seems to have been a fairly widespread practice in the Maghreb. According to an account preserved by Maqqarī (*Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, Beirut 1986, II, p.264), Shaikh Abū l-Ḥasan Ibn Ghālib, a disciple of Ibn al-ʿArīf, prescribed it to his disciples at the time of his death. Ibn ʿArabī himself records that Shaikh Abū l-Rabīʿ al-Mālaqī also used to practise it on the occasion of someone's death (*Fut.*, IV, p.474).

151. *Waḥīd*, MS. Bibliothèque Nationale 3525, f° 217 (reference courtesy of D. Gril).

Shaikh something to eat; but he paid no attention whatever, did not touch the food, and remained in the same position. His host was distraught, and thought the Shaikh was upset or that something in the food had displeased him. The Shaikh remained as he was until the evening prayer, performed the ritual prayers and then returned immediately to his position facing towards the *qibla*. After the evening prayer he went and joined the people present and, visibly radiant, asked for something to eat. The host told him how much his attitude had affected him, but the Shaikh replied: "It had nothing to do with that. I simply made a commitment to God that I would not eat or drink anything until He had pardoned the man who used to curse me; it was for his sake that I recited the formula '*lā ilāha illā llāh*' seventy thousand times, and I saw that he had been pardoned".' Finally, thanks to the testimony of Quṭb al-Dīn Shirāzī,[152] we know exactly how Ibn ᶜArabī and his disciples set about performing the rite. 'Ṣadr al-Dīn and Ibn ᶜArabī had adopted the custom of reciting this formula on the night following somebody's death. They did so in the following way: ten thousand peas were massed together and divided up among the people present. Everyone had to count off the peas he had received seven times, while reciting "*lā ilāha illā llāh*" over each pea with the aim of delivering the deceased from the flames of hell. When everybody had finished, they would attribute the merit of these recitations to one of the people present and he in turn would attribute the merit to the deceased.'

As for the type of *dhikr* practised by Ibn ᶜArabī, we have already seen that towards the end of his life he appears to have favoured the *shahāda* formula in preference to the name 'Allāh' which had been transmitted to him when he was still a youth by Shaikh ᶜUryabī. It will also be remembered that he took a formal stand against *samāᶜs* or gatherings in which invocation was accompanied by singing and musical instruments. However, a passage in Jandī's *Sharḥ al-fuṣūṣ* shows us Qūnawī and Ibn Sawdakīn participating in one of these musical *dhikr* sessions: 'Shaikh Ṣadr al-Dīn told me that one day he found himself together with Shaikh Ismāᶜīl b. Sawdakīn, disciple of the Seal of the Saints, and Shaikh Saᶜd al-Dīn Ibn Ḥamawayh[153] at a *samāᶜ* in Damascus. Shaikh Saᶜd al-Dīn rose up during the course of the ceremony while everyone else was sitting on a bench in the house, and he remained standing for the rest of the *samāᶜ* with his hands on his neck and his head

152. Tabrīzī, *Rawḍat al-janān*, I, pp.325–26 (personal communication by W. Chittick).

153. Saᶜd al-Dīn b. Ḥamawayh was, as already noted, a disciple of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (cf. Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt*, p.428) and met Qūnawī and his master Kirmānī several times (cf. *Manāqib Kirmānī*, p.98). Jāmī (*Nafaḥāt*, pp.472–73) records Saᶜd al-Dīn being asked 'What was your impression of Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn ᶜArabī?' and replying, 'He is a shoreless ocean'. Are we to conclude from this that the two masters actually met? At any rate Corbin notes that they were on writing terms with each other (*Creative Imagination*, p.31, n.6).

lowered, as when one wishes to glorify and honour somebody . . .. When the ceremony was over he said, with his eyes still closed: "Where is Ṣadr al-Dīn? Where is Shams al-Dīn Ismāᶜīl?" We approached him, took him in our arms and embraced him. He opened his eyes, looked at us and then said: "The Messenger of God was there. I was standing before him just as you saw me, and after he had left I wanted my eyes first of all to look upon you!" '[154]

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When Ibn ᶜArabī settled down in Damascus, in 620/1221, Muᶜaẓẓam, the son of Sultan ᶜĀdil, had been reigning for five years. For reasons that are not altogether easy to understand, this Ayyūbid prince was one of the most popular rulers of Damascus.[155] Perhaps his popularity had something to do with his abhorrence for the pomp and ceremonial with which oriental sovereigns usually surrounded themselves. That at least is the opinion of the chroniclers of his period: not only of Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī[156] who was an intimate friend of his but also of Abū Shāma, a writer less suspect of partiality, who says of him: 'He did not care for the splendour, honours and eulogies that kings have such a liking for . . .. Often he would ride on horseback all alone, and those of his servants who wanted to followed him at a distance . . .. His company was agreeable, he was generous to his companions and he would share everything with them as though he were one of them'.[157] However, this image was to become slightly tarnished by Muᶜaẓẓam's attitude towards the *qāḍī* Zakī al-Dīn Ṭāhir, a man who inspired a profound dislike in him and whom he publicly humiliated in 616. 'While he [Zakī al-Dīn] was seated at his home in Bāb al-Barīd, in his court, he had one of his henchmen bring him a cloak and headgear that were of a ridiculous colour and shape, parodying the gesture of a sultan conferring on his servant a robe of honour (*khilᶜa*) for the sake of honouring him. He obliged him to remain seated at his court in this grotesque get-up, carrying his mockery as far as to pay the humiliated *qāḍī* the customary honours which are normally offered in such a situation . . .. The unfortunate *qāḍī* only survived a few months after this tragi-comedy, which had been perfectly orchestrated by Muᶜaẓẓam; he died of grief in his home, which he no longer dared to leave.'[158] It is remarkable that in spite of this unpleasant affair, and also in spite of his decision to reinstate illegal taxes (*mukūs*), Muᶜaẓẓam was respected by the *ᶜulamā'*—who appre-

154. Jandī, *Sharḥ al-fuṣūṣ*, p.107. Possibly we are to detect here the influence of Iranian Sufis (Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī) with whom Qūnawī had connections.

155. For Muᶜaẓẓam's reign in Damascus cf. *From Saladin to the Mongols*, pp.187–92.

156. Ibid., p.189.

157. *Tarājim*, p.152.

158. Pouzet, *Aspects de la vie religieuse à Damas*, I, p.131; *Tarājim*, pp.117–18.

ciated his profound knowledge of philology, grammar and matters of law—and especially by the Ḥanafites. In the case of the Ḥanafites, their sympathies for him are easy to understand: as was mentioned earlier, Muᶜaẓẓam abandoned the Shāfiᶜite school with which the Ayyūbids were traditionally associated in favour of the Ḥanafite *madhhab*—of which he appears to have been a 'fanatic supporter'.[159]

Where foreign politics are concerned, Muᶜaẓẓam's reign is chiefly remembered for his clashes with his brothers Kāmil of Egypt and Ashraf of the Jazīra; in 622 these conflicts induced him to form an alliance with the leader of the Khwārizmians, Jalāl al-Dīn Mangubirdī, who had taken possession of Iran, Azerbaijan and Diyār Bakr. While al-Ashraf for his part sought the aid of Kaykūbād, the sultan of Anatolia, in 623 Kāmil sent a mission to Frederick the Second to propose a deal: Jerusalem in exchange for his military backing against Muᶜaẓẓam. Among the Ayyūbids fraternity was just an empty word. At Baghdad, the caliph became disturbed by the alliance between Muᶜaẓẓam and the Khwārizmians and dispatched a mission to Damascus to persuade the sultan to renege on his agreement with Jalāl al-Dīn Mangubirdī.[160] However, in Dhū l-Qaᶜda 624, or November 1227, Muᶜaẓẓam died before the dispute had been resolved. Just a few months earlier, in Ramaḍān of the same year, the 'Emperor of the Mongols', Genghis Khān, had died as well.

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Ibn ᶜArabī was to remember this particular year for two visions he had of the Prophet. The first occurred during the night of Wednesday 20 Rabīᶜ I, 624/1227, and allowed him to resolve the thorny problem as to the superiority or inferiority of angels with regard to men. 'I saw the Prophet in a vision, and I asked him about this matter after mentioning to him the different opinions held by the *ᶜulamā'*. The Messenger said to me: "Angels are superior [to men]." I answered him: "I have faith in your reply, but what argument am I to give if I am asked about the matter?" He said to me: "You know that I am the best of men, and you are also familiar with the *ḥadīth* I have transmitted from God, in which He says: 'Whoever mentions My name inside himself, I mention his name inside Myself, and whoever mentions My name in an assembly, I mention his name in an assembly better than his [i.e. among the angels]'.[161] How many men have mentioned the name of God in an assembly where I was present, and so, how many men has God mentioned in an

159. Pouzet, op. cit., I, p.70.
160. For all these various events cf. *From Saladin to the Mongols*, pp.170–85.
161. Bukhārī, *tawḥīd* 15; Tirmidhī, *duᶜā'*, 131.

assembly better than that assembly!" Nothing could have delighted me more than this discussion, because it was an issue that had been bothering me.'[162]

Eight months later, on the 23rd of Dhū l-Qaᶜda in the same year, 624/1277, Ibn ᶜArabī had another discussion with the Prophet, this time regarding the resurrection of animals. 'I asked him if animals will be resurrected on the Day of Judgement. He replied: "No, animals will not be resurrected on the Day of Judgement". I asked him: "Is that certain? Is there no possible interpretation of the matter (*yaqīn min ghayri ta'wīl*)?" He answered: "It is certain, no interpretation"'.[163]

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With the death of Muᶜaẓẓam, Damascus entered a period of fresh troubles. His son, Nāṣir Dāwūd, quite naturally laid claim to the throne; but Kāmil, who for a long time had been dreaming of annexing the land of Shām, had decided otherwise and dispatched his army to Damascus. Nāṣir sought the aid of his uncle Ashraf; instead, Ashraf entered into negotiations with Kāmil and eventually concluded a pact with him that they would dethrone Nāṣir. In the month of Rabīᶜ II 626 (March 1229), al-Ashraf's troops, joined by Kāmil's contingents, commenced the siege of Damascus. Slightly earlier, on 22 Rabīᶜ I 626 (18 February 1229), Kāmil had concluded the treaty with Frederick the Second which involved the ceding of Jerusalem.[164] The surrender caused turmoil among Christians[165] just as much as among Muslims. 'The muezzins and imāms of the al-Aqṣā and al-Ṣakhra mosques went to al-Kāmil's tent and performed the call to prayer at the wrong time by way of protest . . .. When the Emperor visited Jerusalem the chief muezzin uttered an *adhān* or call to prayer in which he added to the traditional formula two verses of anti-Christian polemic . . ..'[166] But the most violent reactions occurred in the bastion of Sunnism, Damascus: besieged by the soldiers of Kāmil and al-Ashraf, the city felt doubtly betrayed. In the words of Abū Shāma: 'This surrender was one of the most painful disgraces ever inflicted on Muslims; it alienated the hearts of the population of Damascus from Kāmil and his men'.[167] Nāṣir Dāwūd seized the opportunity, and asked Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī to denounce the Jaffa treaty in his Friday sermon so as to stir up the anger of the

162. *Kitāb al-mubashshirāt*, MS. Bayazid 1686, dated 667H and read before Qūnawī, f° 61, and MS. Fatih 5322, f° 92. Cf. also *Fut.*, I, p.527.
163. Ibid., MS. Bayazid, f° 61b; MS. Fatih 5322, f° 92b.
164. For the events of this period cf. *From Saladin to the Mongols*, pp.193–207.
165. The Jaffa treaty was denounced by Pope Gregory the Ninth.
166. E. Sivan, *L'Islam et la croisade*, p.147; cf. also Francesco Gabrieli, *Chroniques arabes des Croisades*, Paris 1977, pp.295–302.
167. *Tarājim*, p.154. For the reactions at Damascus cf. also Sivan, op. cit., pp.147–48.

people of Damascus and rouse their enthusiasm to fight. Ibn Wāṣil records that 'it was a day to be remembered: a day that resounded with the cries, weeping and moaning of the crowd'.[168] However, confronted by the troops of Kāmil and al-Ashraf, Nāṣir's tenacity and the fierce resistance put up by his subjects proved vain and hopeless. After two months of the siege foodstuffs had become rare, prices had increased and for the first time the city had suffered serious damage.[169] As Abū Shāma writes: 'My father and the shaikhs of Damascus have told me that this siege was the most severe they had experienced'.[170] Finally Nāṣir yielded to reason and opened the gates of Damascus to his uncles, who entered triumphant in Shaʿbān 626, June 1229.

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What was Ibn ʿArabī's reaction to the announcement that Jerusalem had been surrendered to the Christians? Doubtless he was profoundly scandalised, like so many other Muslims; the man who some years earlier had requested Sultan Kaykā'ūs to reinstate the rules regarding the status of *dhimmīs* in the Islamic world could not have helped disapproving of a gesture so humiliating for Islam and for Muslims. Did he communicate his disapproval orally to his disciples? Very probably he did, but our only specific information on the subject is his recommendation in the *Bāb al-waṣāyā* declaring it illicit for a Muslim to stay in Jerusalem as long as the city is in Christian hands.[171]

The absence of any criticisms of Kāmil and his political actions in Ibn ʿArabī's writings—at any rate in the writings that have come down to us: we may well suppose he was more explicit about the matter in his correspondence—need not surprise us. The fact is that, generally speaking, in the corpus of Ibn ʿArabī's works we never find him adopting a political position. For example, attention has already been drawn to his silence regarding Almohad doctrine and Ibn Tumart's highly heterodox claim that he was the Mahdī.

This silence must not be taken as a sign of lack of interest. As we have seen time and time again, Ibn ʿArabī showed considerable concern for the religious community, the *Umma*, kept a watchful eye on the acts and deeds of its leaders, and was anxious about the increasingly threatened future of the *dār al-islām*. The fact that in his writings he chose not to discuss these

168. Ibn Wāṣil *ap.* F. Gabrieli, *Chroniques arabes des Croisades*, p.299. Cf. also p.300 for the account by Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī.

169. *Tarājim*, p.155.

170. Ibid.

171. *Fut.*, IV, p. 460.

circumstantial issues was simply because they held no place in the message God had instructed him to transmit to future generations.

Some months after these dramatic events, at the end of Muḥarram 627 (December 1229), the Prophet came to find him and handed him the book of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, the 'Bezels of Wisdoms'. 'I saw the Messenger of God in a vision of good omen that was granted to me during the final ten days of the month of Muḥarram in the year 627 at Damascus—may God protect her! In his hand he was holding a book, and he said to me: "This is the book of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. Take it and give it to humanity so that they may obtain benefit from it". I replied: "I hear you, and I obey God, His Messenger and those among us who are the keepers of the commandment", as it has been prescribed (Qur'ān 4:59). So, I set about fulfilling this wish. With that aim in mind I purified my intention and my aspiration so as to make this book known just as the Messenger of God had assigned it to me, without adding anything to it or taking anything away . . .. I state nothing that has not been projected towards me; I write nothing except what has been inspired in me. I am neither a prophet nor a messenger, but simply an inheritor; and I labour for the future life.'[172] This passage is followed by twenty-seven chapters which refer to twenty-seven specific divine wisdoms bestowed on twenty-seven prophets. These prophets—twenty-five of whom correspond to the prophets mentioned in the Qur'ān[173]—represent the twenty-seven major prophetic types with which the lengthy series of prophets (*anbiyā'*) sent to mankind from Adam down to Muḥammad is affiliated.

This typology, based on the esoteric interpretation of Qur'ānic verses referring to the individuals in question, is of major significance for any analysis of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of sainthood (*walāya*). As all the saints or *awliyā'* are 'heirs' to the prophets, each of them incarnates one particular form of sainthood the model and source of which are represented by one of the 'major prophets'. A saint can therefore be 'Mosaic' (*mūsāwī*), 'Abrahamic' (*ibrāhīmī*), 'Christic' (*ʿīsāwī*) in type, and so on—even combining in himself several of these 'inheritances'. The distinction established in this way by Ibn ʿArabī between various modes of spiritual realisation, plus the details he either gives or hints at regarding the signs of recognition that enable one to identify a saint's specific nature, were subsequently to become one of the characteristic features of Islamic saintly literature.

But sainthood or *walāya*—and in particular the sensitive issue of the 'Seal

172. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, pp.47–8; cf. M. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, pp.49–50.

173. The two prophets who are the subject of a chapter each in the *Fuṣūṣ* but do not occur in the Qur'ān are Seth and Khālid b. Sinān. See Michel Chodkiewicz's analysis of the issue in chapter 5 of *Seal of the Saints*, where details are also given about the 27 'major prophetic types' as well as about the symbolism of the number 27 in Islam.

of the Saints', broached in the second chapter devoted to Seth—is far from being the only subject of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. In a more condensed and abstract fashion than in the *Futūḥāt*—where autobiographical details abound, giving the exposition a personal warmth and emphasis which here are absent—the Shaikh al-Akbar presents all the principal ideas of his metaphysical doctrine: the Oneness of Being, the notions of 'pre-eternal suchness' (*ᶜayn thābita*) and the Perfect Man (*insān kāmil*), the universality of the divine presence in every representation of God that created beings make for themselves, and the infinity of Mercy—from which Ibn ᶜArabī draws some radical consequences.

'But one would think they haven't read the *Fuṣūṣ!*', cries the author of the *Lisān al-mīzān*[174] about those who have had the impudence, or at the very least the thoughtlessness, to praise the Shaikh al-Akbar. This veritable cry from the heart by Ibn Ḥajar is highly indicative of the indignation the *Fuṣūṣ* must have aroused among the *ᶜulamā'*. In fact all the attacks which were to be launched on Ibn ᶜArabī by exotericists from the eighth century down to the present day (and probably on to the end of time) have been focussed on this particular work of his and on the themes it expounds. And yet not one of the themes tackled in the *Fuṣūṣ*—the Unity of Being, the final salvation of the Pharaoh, the non-eternity of infernal punishments, and so forth—is absent from the *Futūḥāt*. But in the one case they are given expression and in a sense diluted over thousands of pages, where they intermingle with a whole crowd of other notions; in the other case they are concentrated and expounded more systematically in a mere hundred pages or so. It was for this reason that—due allowance being made for the intellectual laziness of the jurists, who were generally happy simply to cite the 'condemnable propositions' already catalogued by Ibn Taymiyya—the *Fuṣūṣ* lent themselves to criticism far more readily than the *Futūḥāt*. It is also interesting to note that from the eighth century onwards Ibn ᶜArabī is referred to in the majority of sources—regardless of whether they are hostile to his school or favourable—as the '*ṣāḥib al-Fuṣūṣ*', 'the author of the *Fuṣūṣ*'. This designation is almost always followed by a complementary one such as '*shaykh waḥdat al-wujūd*', 'he who teaches the doctrine of the Oneness of Being'; and indeed in the *Fuṣūṣ* one finds enunciated with more conciseness and openness than in the *Futūḥāt* those great articulations of Ibn ᶜArabī's metaphysical doctrine which his disciples were in future to refer to as *waḥdat al-wujūd*, the Oneness of Being.

In recent times some important works have been written on the subject of *waḥdat al-wujūd*; especially worth mentioning are the books by Izutsu[175] and

174. *Lisān al-mīzān*, Hyderabad 1329, V, p.312.

175. Izutsu, *A comparative study of the key philosophical concepts in Sufism and Taoism, I: The*

ᶜAfīfī.[176] Within the framework of this essentially biographical study it is impossible to contribute to the debate in any significant way, and it will be enough here simply to outline in brief the area covered by this convenient expression, which is also rather dangerous precisely because it is reductive.

'The Oneness of God from the point of view of the Names that lay claim to us is the Oneness of Multiplicity (*Aḥadiyyat al-kathra*); but the Oneness of God in the sense that He has no need either of us or of the Names is the Oneness of Essence (*Aḥadiyyat al-ᶜayn*).'[177] This passage from the *Fuṣūṣ* introduces a fundamental articulation of Ibn ᶜArabī's teaching, because it implies three key ideas: Absolute Oneness, or the Oneness of unconditioned Essence in all its transcendental nakedness; the Oneness of Multiplicity, which is the level at which the Names appear as *ad intra* determinations; and finally the unfolding *ad extra* of this multiplicity, starting from the 'Names that lay claim to us' because each Name calls for a 'place of manifestation' (*maẓhar*) where it can produce its effects (the Lord, *Rabb*, needs a vassal, *marbūb*, and so on). So Ibn ᶜArabī envisages three levels of Being—or rather three aspects, because strictly speaking there is no hierarchy (which would imply some form of duality) any more than there is temporal succession. The first, the aspect of Absolute Oneness, is the aspect often simply referred to by Ibn ᶜArabī as *Aḥadiyya*. The second aspect under which the Names appear is the one he generally refers to as *wāḥidiyya* or *waḥdāniyya*.[178] This is the 'Oneness of Multiplicity' expressed in the famous *ḥadīth qudsī*, 'I was a hidden treasure and I wanted to be known, so I created created beings so that I could be known'. By definition a treasure contains riches, and in Ibn ᶜArabī's perspective these riches are the Names; these are not identical to Essence, but at the same time they are not different from it because 'every Name simultaneously designates both Essence and the particular meaning it assumes . . .. The Name is therefore the Named from the point of view of Essence, but it is distinct from it from the point of view of the specific significance attributed to it'.[179] This means that, inasmuch as each Name is identical with Essence, it contains all the others;[180] their virtual differentiation only becomes actual to the extent that their authority (*ḥukm*) is capable

Ontology of Ibn Arabi, Tokyo 1966. See also his *Unicité de l'existence et création perpétuelle en mystique islamique*, Paris 1980.

176. ᶜAfīfī, *The mystical philosophy of Ibnu l'Arabi*, 2nd ed., London 1964.

177. Ibn Arabī also uses the terms *Aḥadiyya al-aḥad* or *al-Aḥadiyya al-dhātiyya* as alternative ways of referring to the same thing: cf. Suᶜād al-Ḥakīm, *Muᶜjam*, § 677.

178. *Muᶜjam* § 679. For a more nuanced and detailed analysis cf. Izutsu's exposition in *Unicité de l'existence et création perpétuelle*, esp. pp.69–83.

179. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, p.79.

180. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, pp.55–6; *Fut.*, I, p.614.

of exerting itself over receptacles (*maẓāhir*). These receptacles are the 'possibilities' which are present from all eternity in the Divine Knowledge: the 'immutable prototypes' (*aʿyān thābita*). This mode of presence is not an 'existence' (that would obviously imply a duality or 'associationism', *shirk*, on the one hand, and the *qidam al-ʿālam* or eternity of the world on the other) but a permanence (*thubūt*).[181] God knows these 'prototypes', but they do not know themselves. It is the Names' nostalgia, their aspiration to manifest themselves, which endows the 'immutable prototypes' with *wujūd*—a word that must here be translated as 'existence'. However, this is not to say that the 'immutable prototypes' have left the state of permanence (*thubūt*) which is eternally theirs: their only existence is in God, their being is nothing but the Being of God. In a sense, then, the universe is 'an illusion within an illusion' (*khayāl fī khayāl*);[182] but from another point of view Ibn ʿArabī is not afraid to state—in apparent contradiction of the preceding statement—that the universe is 'entirely Reality' or 'entirely God' (*ḥāqqun kulluhu*), or to make other similar declarations.[183] A third type of formulation resolves the contradiction: 'The world is not God, it is only what manifests *in* the Being of God' (or 'in real Being': *al-ʿālam mā huwa ʿayn al-ḥaqq innamā huwa mā ẓahara fī l-wujūd al-ḥaqq*). Just as the distinction between Essence and Names is entirely conceptual, because none of the Names has any reality apart from Essence or adds to Essence anything it did not already contain, so the distinction between Names and 'immutable prototypes'—and therefore also between the Names and created beings, whose predispositions and very nature (*istiʿdādāt*) are determined by their 'prototypes' (*aʿyān*)—remains completely relative: Names and prototypes are merely the two inseparable sides of the 'objects' of God's Knowledge. As to God Himself, He is simultaneously the Knower and the Known—a fact expressed by the Divine Name *al-ʿalīm* which (like all names of agency) possesses this double meaning.[184]

As Henry Corbin has shown remarkably well,[185] this nostalgia on the part of the Divine Names which lies at the root of the creation of the universe is nothing other than the unknown God's amorous desire to reveal Himself so as to contemplate Himself—as illustrated in the second part of the *ḥadīth* cited above: 'so I created created beings so that I could be known'. Through the 'most holy effusion' (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*) which gives rise in Him to the plurality of possibilities, and then through the 'holy effusion' (*al-fayḍ al-muqaddas*)

181. Cf. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, p.83; *Fut.*, I, p.302, III, p.429, IV, pp.81, 108.
182. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, p.104.
183. Cf. e.g. *Fut.*, IV, p.40.
184. For these *faʿīl* names cf. *Fut.*, III, p.300.
185. See his fine analysis in *Creative Imagination*, pp.114–16.

which gives them existence.[186] God contemplates Himself in His manifestation, which is the displaying of His Perfections and therefore represents the third aspect of Being. These twin processes, corresponding to two levels of autodetermination (*taʿayyun*), must not be thought of as sequential. They are concomitant and perpetual: God is *fayyāḍ ʿalā l-istimrār*, the eternal bestower of abundance.[187] The Divine Perfections are the riches of the 'hidden treasure': 'The Prototypes of the Universe (*aʿyān al-ʿālam*) are guarded by Him in His treasuries (*khazā'in*). His treasuries are His knowledge; what they contain is us'.[188] As each immutable prototype is merely the externalisation of a Name which exerts its authority (*ḥukm*) over it, every being is the servant (*ʿabd*) of a Name which is its lord (*rabb*), and its knowledge of God will never go beyond the Name that governs it.[189]

What we are in the state of 'immutable prototypes' in God's Knowledge is simply what we are predisposed to become in the state of existence (*wujūd*).[190] The notion of *istiʿdād* or 'predisposition' which intervenes here is of capital importance because it has repercussions on the problem of destiny (*qadar*) and Divine Omnipotence on the one hand, and on the other hand it is related to the problem of the attribution of acts either to God or to created beings and consequently to the problem of Divine Justice. As Ibn ʿArabī writes in the *Fuṣūṣ*: 'All that He knew of created beings was what they were [in the state of permanence, *thubūt*], and He only wanted what is . . .. What is produced [in existence] is what the possible was potentially in the state of permanence'.[191] Ibn ʿArabī goes on to explain that the knowledge God possesses of this predisposition on the part of created things in the state of permanence to be what they become in the state of existence constitutes God's irrevocable argument (*ḥujjat Allāh al-bāligha*) on the Day of Judgement. 'For', he writes, 'His will is one of His links with His objects. It is an assignation (*nisba*) which depends on His knowledge, and His knowledge is in turn an assignation which depends on the known object. In other words it is you and your states! So instead of the knowledge acting upon the object, it is the object that acts upon the knowledge and transmits to it of itself what it is in its essence.'[192] Consequently, to those men who on the Day of Judgement will want to exonerate themselves God will retort: 'I manifested you in existence in

186. Cf. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, p.49.
187. *Fut.*, I, p.57.
188. *Fut.*, IV, p.108. It will be noted that here again we encounter the idea of a treasure, although expressed this time not by the root KNZ as in the *ḥadīth qudsī* but by the root KHZN.
189. See above, pp.138–39.
190. Cf. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, pp.59–60.
191. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, p.82.
192. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, pp.82–3.

conformity with [the knowledge] of your essence that you gave Me'.[193] Formulated in terms of the distinction between *qaḍā'* or pre-eternal decree and *qadar* or existentiated decree, this amounts to saying: '*qaḍā'* is God's decree regarding things *according to what He knows of them and in them*, . . . whereas *qadar* is the actual existentiation at a given moment of that for which things are predestined by their essence, and no more; and *the* qaḍā' *only has effect on things through themselves.*'[194]

But how are we to reconcile predestination understood in this way with the attribution of acts to God as this is expounded for example in the famous verse, 'It is God who has created you—you and what you do' (Qur'ān 37:96)?[195] On the night of Saturday 6th Rajab, 633/1236, Ibn ᶜArabī had a vision during the course of which he had a long discussion with God about this delicate issue. 'Through a visual revelation God showed me His creation beginning from the very first being created, which was preceded by no other created being because God was all there was. He asked me: "Is there any room there for confusion or perplexity?" "No", I replied. And He said: "Similarly, in everything you see in the way of contingent beings (*al-muḥdathāt*), there is nobody who in this matter has been granted any share whatever of influence or creation. I am He who creates things *in* causes and not *through* causes; so it is that they exist through My command" . . .. He said to me: "When I grant you knowledge of something observe the rules of propriety, because the Divine Presence will permit no contention". I replied: "That is precisely what I was saying: where is the contention and where is the propriety as long as You are He who creates both contention and propriety? Since it is You who create them, they must indeed exercise their status!" He said to me: "That's fine! [But] when the Qur'ān is recited, listen and keep quiet".[196] I said to Him: "It's up to You that it should be as You say. Create hearing so that I may listen, and create silence so that I may keep quiet! That which speaks to You now is none other than what You have created". He answered me: "*I only create what I know, and what I know is in conformity with the object of My knowledge (mā akhluq illā mā ᶜalimtu wa mā ᶜalimtu illa mā huwa al-maᶜlūm ᶜalayhi)*".'[197]

193. *Fut.*, IV, p.72.

194. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, p.131.

195. There are other verses which, on the contrary, attribute acts to the created being, and others again which attribute them to God and to the servant simultaneously (cf. e.g. Qur'ān 8:17, 'When you shot the arrows it was not you who shot the arrows but God who shot them'). The Emir ᶜAbd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī resolves this apparent ambiguity in the following way: 'If God has sometimes attributed acts to His servants, this is simply because they are forms and aspects of the One and Only Reality'—a statement which is in perfect accord with Ibn ᶜArabī's teaching. Cf. *Écrits spirituels*, p.146 (*mawqif* 275).

196. An allusion to Qur'ān 7:204.

197. *Fut.*, II, p.204.

Ibn ᶜArabī also describes the process of the unfolding of Multiplicity out of Oneness as being an uninterrupted and perpetual succession of theophanies (*tajalliyāt*) which are renewed[198] at every instant. God, He of the 'hidden treasure', in His desire to contemplate Himself epiphanises Himself in the forms of created beings. In the words of Ibn ᶜArabī, 'The world is nothing other than His epiphanisation in the forms of the immutable essences which cannot exist without Him'.[199] And elsewhere he writes: 'He is the mirror in which you see yourself, and you are the mirror in which He sees His Names and the manifestation of their status. And they are none other than He!'[200] Just as the Names merge with the Named from a certain point of view, but are differentiated from the point of view of their manifestation in the created beings over whom they exert their authority, so the theophanies are none other than the *Mutajallī*, 'He who epiphanises Himself', from the point of view of His Essence and yet are distinct from Him from the point of view of what receives them, because it is the receptacle that conditions the form of the theophany.[201] By virtue of their predispositions in the state of permanence (*thubūt*), created beings are 'theophanic loci' of unequal purity: from the perfect transparency of the saint through to the opacity of the irreligious, the one and only light is diffused differently although without its own nature being in any way affected. Correspondingly, it is also the predisposition (*istiᶜdād*) which determines the capacity of each being to identify (both in all other people and in oneself) the theophanies for what they are: infinitely multiple and infinitely varied apparitions of the one and only Self-Epiphaniser (*Mutajallī*). It is reserved for the Perfect Man (*insān kāmil*) alone—stainless mirror of the higher and lower realities (*al-ḥaqā'iq al-ḥaqqiyya wa l-khalqiyya*)—to recognise God in this way in all His forms and so validate all beliefs (*iᶜtiqādāt*) without exception: for, whether the created being wants it or not, knows it or not, 'He is the Worshipped in everything one worships', and every way that one chooses of portraying or representing Him possesses some divine 'support', some *istināds ilāhī*.[202]

During 627—the same year he wrote the *Fuṣūṣ*—Ibn ᶜArabī also compiled an inventory (*Fihris*) of his works for Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī,[203] who had joined

198. For the notion of 'theophanies' cf. *Muᶜjam*, pp.257–69.

199. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, p.81.

200. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, p.62.

201. *Fuṣūṣ*, I, p.79, where he states that certain *majālī*, or receptacles of theophanies, have pre-excellence over others. Cf. *Muᶜjam*, § 127.

202. Regarding the notion of 'God created in beliefs' cf. *Muᶜjam*, § 31; Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, pp.195–200. The most recent study of the doctrine of the perfect man is by Masataka Takeshita, *Ibn ᶜArabī's Theory of the Perfect Man*, Tokyo 1987, which analyses at length the genesis of the theme in Islamic thought.

203. Cf. R.G. § 142.

up with him again in Damascus in 626 and was to remain with him for several years, as we see from a number of *samā*ᶜs that show them together in 626, 627, 628, 629, 630 and 634.[204] One notes that this long period of companionship was devoted essentially to the study of those of Ibn ᶜArabī's works whose esoteric nature is most pronounced: for example the *ᶜAnqā' mughrib*, the *Kitāb al-isrā'* and *Kitāb maqām al-qurba*, and above all the *Fuṣūṣ* which Ibn ᶜArabī transmitted to Qūnawī during a session in which, as we saw earlier, Qūnawī was the only hearer. Here we are fortunate in having the precious testimony of Jandī, who explains how Qūnawī and he 'received' the *Fuṣūṣ*. 'While my master and guide Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Yūsuf al-Qūnawī was giving me a commentary on the prologue to the book [i.e. the *Fuṣūṣ*], the inspiration of the world of the mystery manifested its signs upon him and the Breath of the Merciful (*al-nafas al-raḥmānī*) began to breathe in rhythm with his breathing. The air from his exhalations and the emanation of his precious breaths submerged my inner and outer being. His "secret" governed my "secret" (*bāṭinī*) in a strange and immediate manner and produced a perfect effect upon my body and my heart. In this way God gave me to understand in the commentary on the prologue the contents of the entire book, and in this proximity inspired in me the preserved contents of its secrets. When the shaikh [Qūnawī] realised what had happened to me, and that by this means the divine decree had been fulfilled, he related to me that he too had asked our master, the author [of the *Fuṣūṣ*], to provide him with a commentary on the book; and that he [Ibn ᶜArabī], through giving him a commentary on the prologue, had made him perceive the core of the quintessence reserved for those who are endowed with intellect, and had produced in him a strange effect by virtue of which he had understood the contents of the entire work.'[205]

Ibn ᶜArabī was to remember 628 (1230–31) as the year in which God spoke with him as He spoke to Moses,[206] 'without intermediary on the blessed plain (*al-buqᶜa al-mubāraka*, Qur'ān 28:30) and in a space the size of the palm of one's hand,[207] in a language that bears no resemblance to created language; what is understood by the person hearing it is precisely what is uttered. From what He told me I understood this in particular: "Be a heaven

204. Cf. R.G. §§ 2, 30, 70, 135, 142, 150, 313, 414, 484, 639.

205. *Sharḥ al-fuṣūṣ*, pp.9–10.

206. *Fut.*, IV, p.485; cf. also *Kitāb al-mubashshirāt* (MS. Bayazid 1686, f° 60b; MS. Fatih 5322, f° 92), where Ibn ᶜArabī specifies that the vision occurred during the night of Thursday 20 Rabīᶜ I, 628.

207. This translation of the word *billa*, which occurs both in the *Futūḥāt* and in the Bayazid manuscript (*min billa ᶜalā qadr al-kaff*), is a conjecture: the normal meaning of the word ('humidity') makes no sense in the context. Perhaps *tall* ('hill') should be read in place of *billa*.

of revelation (*samāᶜ waḥy*), an earth of water-sources (*arḍ yanbūᶜ*) and a mountain of immutability (*jabal taskīn*).'''

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Less than a year later, in Ṣafar 629/December 1231, the Shaikh al-Akbar completed the first draft of the *Futūḥāt makkiyya*. In the introduction to the first volume of his critical edition, O. Yahia states that Ibn ᶜArabī subsequently departed 'on a pilgrimage to Mecca to celebrate solemnly the completion of his prestigious work'. Unfortunately, he provides no reference in support of his statement. Perhaps he is simply relying on a number of late sources[208] which—basing themselves here as elsewhere on Fayrūzābādī's *fatwā*—declare that when Ibn ᶜArabī had finished the *Futūḥāt* he went off to Mecca and placed the sheets of the work on the roof of the Kaᶜba. One year later (if we are to believe these sources) he gathered up the pages of his book and noted that bad weather had left them untouched. This anecdote, which Fayrūzābādī is apparently the first author to record, is not particularly credible. That the Shaikh al-Akbar went to the holy places to celebrate the completion of a work whose very first lines were inspired and written in the sacred sanctuary of the Kaᶜba is at least a plausible hypothesis. But it is difficult to imagine him climbing onto the roof of God's House, the Bayt Allāh, to deposit the *Futūḥāt*: such a gesture would surely show a lack of respect with regard both to the House and its Master which totally contradicts Ibn ᶜArabī's own teaching. Also, it is a long way from Damascus to Mecca, with very many stops; however, nowhere in the writings of the Shaikh does one find any trace of a reference to a stay outside of Syria after the year 620. Perhaps, on the other hand, it is a question of one of those miraculous journeys he appears sometimes to have performed. Regarding supernatural travels of this kind we have the following account by Qūnawī, preserved by Jandī.[209] 'As he [i.e. Ibn ᶜArabī] was leaving Damascus one day by one of the gates, he suddenly felt an urge to perform the *ṭawāf* or circumambulations round the Kaᶜba; at that very same instant he found himself at the gate of Mecca. He proceeded to perform the ritual circumambulations. When the hour for the siesta arrived, he went to the house of a friend in Mecca and had a siesta. On waking, he repeated his ablution and left barefoot to perform the *ṭawāf* again. After finishing the *ṭawāf* and the prayer in the mosque, he remembered his disciples in Damascus and also his family, who needed him, and he [instantaneously] found himself back at the gate of Damascus. When

208. For example Shaᶜrānī, *Yawāqīt*, p.10; *Manāqib Ibn ᶜArabī*, p.76.

209. *Nafḥat al-rūḥ wa tuḥfat al-futūḥ*, Tehran 1403/1362, pp.124–25 (personal communication from W. Chittick).

he arrived home Shaikh Ṣadr al-Dīn asked him: "Master, what have you done with your shoes?" "I forgot them at somebody's house in Mecca." "You mean to say that during these three hours that you were absent you went to and returned from Mecca?" "Yes", the Shaikh replied . . .. Shaikh Ṣadr al-Dīn made a note of the day and the time. Some time later the friends [from Mecca] returned [to Damascus] bringing with them the Shaikh's sandals, and they related that he had indeed appeared on such-and-such a day at such-and-such an hour and had left barefoot after the siesta to go and perform the *ṭawāf*—"for it was the custom of our shaikh when performing the *ṭawāf* to take them off. When the people in the *ḥaram* got wind of his presence they went to join him; but all of a sudden he disappeared, leaving his sandals with us."' Jandī adds at the end of this account a detail which is not without interest. He explains that this was not a case of what is ordinarily known as *ṭayy al-arḍ*, or retreating of the earth beneath the feet of saints, but an instance of something unique and specific to the Seal of Saints. This comment would seem capable of interpretation in the following way: *ṭayy al-arḍ* refers to the power certain saints possess of being able rapidly to traverse long distances with every step they take, but, rapid though the journey may be, they still perform a journey nonetheless. However, in the case of Ibn ᶜArabī as described by Qūnawī, there is instantaneous translocation: he only had to *think* of Mecca to find himself there immediately, and the same thing happened to him on his return.

Three years later, in 632/1234, Ibn ᶜArabī embarked on a second draft of the *Futūḥāt*; this, he explains, included a number of additions and a number of deletions as compared with the previous draft.[210] Essentially it was simply a matter of stylistic variants or doctrinal nuances which did not involve any substantial modification of the text or its content.

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At the very start of this same year, 632, on the first of Muḥarram (26 September 1234), Ibn ᶜArabī wrote the *Ijāza* for Sultan Ashraf,[211] who had seized the throne from his nephew Nāṣir Dāwūd in 626. This Ayyūbid prince was clearly anxious to preserve strict orthodoxy in his realm.[212] In 628 he ordered the imprisonment of Shaikh ᶜAlī Ḥarīrī, whom ᶜIzz al-Dīn Sulamī had accused of heresy; Abū Shāma, who is above suspicion of anti-Sufi prejudice, states that the Ḥarīriyya had been shamelessly contravening the *sharīᶜa*.[213]

210. *Fut.*, IV, p.554.

211. *Ijāza*, ed. A. Badawī in *Quelques figures et thèmes de la philosophie islamique*, Paris 1979, p.172.

212. For his reign at Damascus cf. *From Saladin to the Mongols*, pp.208–14.

213. *Tarājim*, p.180.

At the same time Ashraf decided to expel the Qalandariyya: a sect, rather than a *ṭarīqa*,[214] which had established itself in Damascus in 616 along with the arrival of Jamāl al-Dīn Sāwī, and which was notorious for its total disregard for the Law. During the following year, 629, Ashraf converted a brothel into a mosque, which he named very simply *masjid al-tawba*, 'mosque of repentance'; and he relieved the theologian Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī of his office—according to Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī he objected to his rationalistic tendencies—and had him put under house arrest.[215]

Al-Ashraf's death in 635/1237, followed shortly afterwards by the death of Kāmil, triggered off a fresh war of succession which lasted two years; finally Ṣāliḥ Ismāᶜīl, another of ᶜĀdil's sons, ascended to the throne. A while after his enthronement Ṣāliḥ Ismāᶜīl came into conflict with the jurist ᶜIzz al-Dīn, who attacked him from the pulpit for his alliance with the Franks. Ṣāliḥ's reaction was immediate: he had ᶜIzz al-Dīn expelled to Egypt.

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Meanwhile, Ibn ᶜArabī divided his time and the last years of his life between the composition of a number of works[216] (including his *Dīwān*), the revision of the *Futūḥāt* (he completed the second draft in 636/1238), and teaching his disciples. 'Tell your disciples: Make the most of my existence before I go!',[217] God had commanded him one day. That seems to have been precisely what they did, gathering more and more frequently around the master to listen to the reading of his works. But on 22 Rabīᶜ II 638[218] the pilgrim arrived at the end of his long terrestrial journey. The Shaikh al-Akbar left his disciples to perform a *miᶜrāj* from which there would be no return: one that would lead him to the *rafīq al-aᶜlā*, the Supreme Friend.

Did he die peacefully at home? None of our credible sources of information entitles us to suppose that his death occurred in dramatic circumstances. However, in Damascus a strange legend has been transmitted from generation to generation right down to the present day, which every Damascene considers it his duty to relate if one so much as mentions the name of Ibn ᶜArabī in his presence. The story goes that Sīdī Muḥyī l-Dīn was assassinated by a group of men—apparently jurists—in front of whom he

214. This is the term (which apart from anything else is somewhat anachronistic for the start of the thirteenth century) used to describe the Qalandariyya by Tahsin Yazici in his article on the subject in *EI*², s.v.

215. For these various events cf. *From Saladin to the Mongols*, pp.209–11.

216. See the chronological table in Appendix 1.

217. *Fut.*, I, p.723.

218. The *Nafḥ* gives 28 Rabīᶜ II, but our other sources—including Abū Shāma who was himself present at Ibn ᶜArabī's burial—say 22 Rabīᶜ II.

had imprudently declared at a gathering: 'The lord whom you worship is beneath my feet' (*rabbukum taḥta qadamī*). It is said that the criminals were severely punished, and that the decision was made to bury the Shaikh al-Akbar on the very spot where the tragic event had occurred. But when they were digging his grave they discovered a chest filled with gold at the very same spot where he had been during the gathering. The teller of the story hastens to add that the Shaikh had wanted to show that really those corrupt jurists worshipped nothing but the goods of this world. This quite literal 'golden legend' has a certain flavour to it, but it is a complete fabrication, very probably invented by a story-teller in search of a public. We possess several accounts of Ibn ʿArabī's death and funeral—in particular the account by his contemporary Abū Shāma[219]—and none of them mentions any incident of the kind. Yūnīnī's version, written only slightly after the event, specifies that three individuals took charge of performing the funerary rites for the deceased: the *qāḍī* Ibn Zakī, ʿImād Ibn Naḥḥās, and Jamāl al-Dīn b. ʿAbd al-Khāliq.[220] The first of these men, as we well know, was Ibn ʿArabī's protector and host. The second, ʿImād al-Dī ʿAbd Allāh b. Ḥasan Ibn al-Naḥḥās (*d.* 654), was according to Abū Shāma 'an ascetic (*zāhid*), a good man, one of the greatest and the noblest';[221] according to the *Wāfī*[222] he was a reliable transmitter in spite of being deaf, and we know from elsewhere that he transmitted *ḥadīth*s to Ibn ʿArabī.[223] As for the third person, to date it has not proved possible to identify him.

According to another legend, transmitted and perhaps even forged by al-Qārī al-Baghdādī, at Ibn ʿArabī's death Damascus went into mourning for three days. 'The sultan, the viziers, princes, *ʿulamā'* and jurists all joined the funeral procession, and the traders shut up their shops for three days as a sign of mourning.'[224] If this had really happened Abū Shāma, who himself attended the Shaikh al-Akbar's funeral service, would not have failed to tell us; in fact he confines himself to the sober remark that Ibn ʿArabī had a 'fine burial' (*janāza ḥasana*). A few rather moving lines in the *Futūḥāt* inform us of Ibn ʿArabī's own wishes: 'I ask of God, both for myself and for my brothers, that when our lives reach their end the person who performs the prayer for the dead over us should be a servant whose "hearing, sight and speech" are God".[225] May it be so for me, for my brothers, for our children, for our fathers,

219. *Tarājim*, p.170. 220. *Wāfī*, IV, p.175. 221. *Tarājim*, p.189.
222. *Wāfī*, XVII, p.132. 223. *Fut.*, IV, p.524. 224. *Manāqib Ibn ʿArabī*, p.24.
225. This is a reference to the *ḥadīth qudsī* frequently cited by Ibn ʿArabī (Bukhārī, *tawāḍu'*). According to him it designates the 'supreme identity'—that is, the identity of *Ḥaqq*, Divine Reality, and *khalq*, the world of creation (cf. *Fut.*, I, p.406, III, p.68, IV, pp.20, 24, 30)—which is 'realised' by saints through the practice of supererogatory works (*qurb al-nawāfil*). In this station

our wives, our friends, and for all Muslims among men and among the *jinns*'.[226]

When a 'prayer of request' (*duʿā'*) is completed, the prescribed response for those who are witnesses to it is *āmīn*, 'So be it'. That will be my response here, just as it has doubtless been the response murmured throughout the centuries, from generation to generation, by stunned and grateful readers of the Shaikh al-Akbar.

God is *perceived* as being the servant's very being, which is what He had been for all eternity. See further *mawqif* 132 in the Emir ʿAbd el-Kader's *Écrits spirituels* (pp.94–8).

226. *Fut.*, I, p.530.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the *Dīwān al-maᶜārif*[1] Ibn ᶜArabī describes the strange vision which became the point of departure for this small unpublished collection of poems. 'Between the state of waking and sleep (*fī wāqiᶜa*) I saw an angel come towards me with a fragment of white light; one would have thought it was a fragment of sunlight. "What's that?," I asked. The reply came: "It is the sura *al-Shuᶜarā*' ". . ..[2] Next I felt something like a hair rising from my chest up to my throat, and then to my mouth. It was an animal with a head, tongue, eyes and lips. Then it expanded until its head reached the two horizons—in both the East and the West. After that it contracted and returned into my chest. I then knew that my words (*kalāmī*) would reach the East and the West . . ..'

And so it was. Throughout the centuries following his death the Shaikh al-Akbar's teaching has continued to spread, more often than not by diffuse and subterranean means, reaching the most distant countries and finally embracing both East and West, Mashreq and Maghreb: Syria, Egypt, North Africa, Iran, Turkey, India, Indonesia, China. In all these countries one can detect the infiltration of Ibn ᶜArabī's teaching at some time or other, in some or other form.

This influence is undoubtedly easiest to spot in Sufi literature. The enormous corpus of Ibn ᶜArabī's writings has given rise to a vast number of interpretative commentaries which have played a large part in making those writings known well beyond the limits of the Arabic-speaking world. In this respect the catalogue of a hundred and twenty commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* which has been compiled by O. Yahia[3] (and the list is by no means complete) is highly significant. Many of these works have been written by Iranians (both Sunnites and Shiᶜites), sometimes in Arabic, sometimes in Persian; six of them are in Turkish. And there are many other texts that have

1. *Dīwān al-maᶜārif*, MS. Fatih 5322, f° 214.
2. The expression is indecipherable.
3. *Histoire et classification*, R.G. § 150.

been inspired by Ibn ᶜArabī's teaching, both in prose and in verse, and written in all the vernacular languages of the *umma*: Urdu,[4] Malay[5] and probably (although the late lamented Joseph Fletcher was not able to confirm this before he died) Chinese.[6] The impact of the Shaikh al-Akbar's works and thought has been so great that even outside the sphere of those who belonged to his school in the strict sense (Qūnawī, Jandī, Qāshānī, Qayṣarī and, subsequently, Jāmī, Nābulusī and the Emir ᶜAbd al-Qādir),[7] later Sufi writers have adopted his technical vocabulary regardless of whether or not they refer to him explicitly, have borrowed some of the key ideas of his doctrine—often without knowing it—and have elaborated on a number of his theories.[8]

And yet Ibn ᶜArabī's influence on Sufism did not only make itself felt at the level of doctrine. The chains or *silsilas*—for example the ones given by Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī[9] and also by Sanūsī in the *Salsabīl al-muᶜīn*[10]—testify to the

4. A large number of quotations and references can be found in Annemarie Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill 1975. Nonetheless, it has plainly been works written in Arabic and Persian—above all those by Aḥmad Sirhindī and Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī—that have played the major role in spreading Ibn ᶜArabī's doctrine. For Sirhindī (often wrongly portrayed by modern Indian writers as a reincarnate Ibn Taymiyya) and his relationship to Ibn ᶜArabī see Y. Friedmann's thesis, *Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī*, Montreal and London, 1971. For Shāh Walī Allāh see the study (historical rather than doctrinal) by Saiyid Athar ᶜAbbās Rizvī, *Shāh Walī Allāh and his times*, Canberra 1980, and the article by ᶜAbdul Ḥaq Anṣārī, 'Shāh Waliy Allāh attempts to revise *waḥdat al-wujūd*', *Islamic Quarterly*, XXVIII.3, pp.150–64.

5. We are especially indebted to Prof. Naquib al-Attas for exploring the Malay sources and revealing both the extent of Ibn ᶜArabī's influence and the vast range of debates that the interpretation of his writings has given rise to. See in particular his *The Mysticism of Ḥamza al-Fansūrī*, Kuala Lumpur 1970, and *Ranīrī and the wujudiyyah of 17th Acheh*, Kuala Lumpur 1966.

6. However, we do know anyway that even after the Cultural Revolution the *Futūḥāt Makkiyya* were still to be found in the only mosque in Peking which remained open during those troubled times (oral communication by M. Chodkiewicz).

7. For the school of Ibn ᶜArabī, and especially for its growth in Persian culture, see the excellent study by James W. Morris, 'Ibn ᶜArabī and his Interpreters', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, CVI (1986).3–4 and CVII (1987).1. This study contains pertinent remarks on the particular forms of expression—themselves influenced by the school and philosophy of Avicenna—that were used by Qūnawī and his disciples, and which gave Ibn ᶜArabī's doctrine a somewhat different emphasis from what we find in Ibn ᶜArabī's own writings, where 'warmth' is never separable from 'light'.

8. A systematic study of Islamic manuscripts from North Africa remains a major desideratum; but in any case Ibn ᶜArabī's influence and explicit references to his writings are easy to detect in a good number of published works, especially those by al-Ḥājj ᶜUmar. However, it seems that quite often expurgated summaries (particularly by Shaᶜrānī) have been used in preference to Ibn ᶜArabī's own works.

9. Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *ᶜIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn* (s.vv. Uwaysiyya; Ibn ᶜArrāq) and *Itḥāf al-aṣfiyā'* (s.vv. Ḥātimiyya; Ṣadriyya).

10. *al-Salsabīl al-muᶜīn fī l-ṭarā'iq al-arbaᶜīn*, in the margin of the Cairo edition of *al-Masā'il al-ᶜashr*, 1353H, pp.70–72.

transmission of the *khirqa akbariyya* from generation to generation. From Syria—where the Shaikh al-Akbar died in 638—via Iran, this *khirqa* pursued its path indefatigably to re-emerge eventually in the Islamic West in the nineteenth century in the person of the Emir ᶜAbd al-Qādir;[11] and it continues to be transmitted today almost everywhere in the Islamic world.

Read, meditated upon, commented on and venerated in abundance, the Shaikh al-Akbar was to experience a quite exceptional posterity which in the eyes of his disciples was not so much the sign of a prolific genius as the proof of the spiritual authority he had been appointed to exert over the saints of the Muslim community. But there is more to the matter than that. Anyone who has read Ibn ᶜArabī knows very well that for him the *umma*, the religious community on whose behalf the Prophet had said he would intercede on the Day of Judgement, is not limited exclusively to the historical Muslim community but encompasses all human communities.[12] It would have been quite inconceivable for the Shaikh al-Akbar to restrict the scope of influence of his own *baraka* to Muslims alone, according to the strict sense of the term 'Muslim'. As supreme heir to he who was sent as a 'mercy for *the worlds*', it was not enough for him to be a source of inspiration to saints (*awliyā'*) and a source of gnosis to gnostics (*ᶜārifūn*): he wished to be a source of hope for all created beings. In his own words: 'Thanks be to God, I am not one of those who love vengeance and punishment. On the contrary, God has created me as a mercy and has made of me an heir to the mercy of him to whom it was said: "We have sent you only as a mercy towards the worlds" (Qur'ān 21:107)'.[13] Elsewhere he affirms again: 'Of the angels whom He has created, God has positioned four as bearers of the Throne, at the four columns that hold it up . . .. He has attributed various degrees of excellence to these columns, and has placed me at the most excellent of them and has made me one of the bearers of the Throne. Indeed apart from the angels whom He has created to bear the Throne, God also possesses forms (*ṣuwar*) from the human race which sustain the Throne, the Seat of the Merciful. I am one of them, and

11. Cf. the Emir Abd el-Kaler, *Écrits spirituels*, introduction, where M. Chodkiewicz gives information about a few of the paths of transmission of the *khirqa akbariyya* down to the present day. See also my Arabic master's dissertation, *L'Émir ᶜAbd al-Qādir et la khirqa akbariyya*, Paris IV, 1980.

12. The text of the *ḥadīth* is '*shafāᶜatī li ahl al-kabā'ir min ummatī*'. Cf. Tirmidhī, *qiyāma*, 11; Ibn Māja, *zuhd*, 27. Ḥallāj, who did not understand the real meaning of '*ummatī*', reproached the Prophet for excluding the non-Muslim communities from his intercession. In this connection it will be noted that in his *Rūḥ al-bayān* Ismāᶜīl Ḥaqqī mentions a text of Ibn ᶜArabī (which has so far not been found) which explains that one of the purposes of the great gathering of prophets at Cordoba in 586 had to do with this mistake by Ḥallāj: they had come together to intercede on his behalf with Muḥammad. Cf. *Seal of the Saints*, pp.132–33.

13. *Fut.*, IV, p.163.

the column which is the best of all is mine: it is the treasury of Mercy. *He has therefore made me an absolutely merciful being* (*raḥīman muṭlaqan*)'.[14]

*

Some interpreters of Ibn ᶜArabī—both Muslim and non-Muslim, eastern and western—have seen in his work nothing but an inspired metaphysical construction, and have obscured this fundamental dimension of universality and generosity which characterises both his person and his work without appreciating the seriousness of the amputation that in so doing they have inflicted on the Akbarian heritage. 'God was shown to me in my inner being (*fī sirrī*) during a vision, and He said to me: "Make My servants know what you have perceived of My generosity . . .. Why do My servants despair of My mercy when My mercy embraces everything?"'[15] This leitmotif of Divine Compassion reaching out to all beings gives the work of the Seal of Muḥammadan Sainthood its dominant quality: the quality of a universal message of hope, of a haunting reminder that *Raḥma*, Mercy, will have the last word. Because all men worship God whether they know it or not, because it is the Sigh of the Merciful who has brought them into existence, because each of them bears within him the imprint of one of the infinitely multiple Faces of the One, it is to eternal bliss that they have been and are being guided from the beginning of eternity. As a messenger of Divine Mercy, Ibn ᶜArabī also wished to be its instrument; that is what he was in this world through the token of a saintliness whose effects were not extinguished with his death. He will also be its instrument in the other world because, as he has promised, on the Day of Judgement he will intercede on behalf of everyone who comes within his sight.[16]

14. *Fut.*, III, p.431.

15. *Fut.*, I, p.708.

16. *Fut.*, I, p.617; see above, chapter 3.

Appendices

1
Chronological table of Ibn ʿArabī's life

YEAR	PLACE	REFERENCES	BIOGRAPHICAL EVENTS	HISTORICAL EVENTS
17 Ramaḍān 560/1165	Murcia	*Wāfī*, IV, 178; *Nafḥ*, II, 163.	Birth of Ibn ʿArabī on Monday night.	Death of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī.
567/1171				Death of Ibn Mardanīsh, Sultan of the Levant. Saladin abolishes the Fatimid caliphate at Cairo.
568/1172	Seville	*Nafḥ*, II, 162.	His family settles in Seville.	
575/1180	Cordoba	Above, Chapter 2.	Meeting at around this time with the philosopher Averroes.	Start of the reign of Caliph Nāṣir.
578/1182	Seville	*Fut.*, I, 331.	Reads the Qur'ān under Shaikh Abū Bakr b. Ṣāf al-Lakhmī.	
580/1184	Andalusia*	*Fut.*, II, 425; & Chapter 2.	Begins his *sulūk* under Shaikh ʿUryabī.	Start of the reign of the Almohad Yaʿqūb al-Manṣūr.
583/1187				Saladin recaptures Jerusalem.
586/1190	Cordoba	*Fuṣūṣ*, I, 110.	Vision of all the prophets.	The Third Crusade.

*No specific place name is mentioned in the document or documents in question.

586/1190	Seville	*Fut.*, IV, 156.	Receives the verse '*qul in kāna abā'ukum . . .*' (Qur'ān 9:24) in a cemetery in Seville.	Frederick the First takes Konya.
—	—	*Fut.*, IV, 162.	Receives the verse '*innamā yastajību alladhīna yasmaʿūn*'.	The Almohads sign a truce with Castile.
—	—	*Fut.*, II, 7.	Meets Mūsā al-Ṣadrānī, disciple of Abū Madyan and one of the seven *abdāl*.	
—	Seville	*Fut.*, IV, 476.	Vision concerning the *ḥadīth:* 'Judge yourselves before you are judged'.	
—	Andalusia*	*Fut.*, II, 8.	Initiatory encounter with a man belonging to the category of '*ḥawāriyyūn*'.	
—	Andalusia*	*Fut.*, I, 616; II, 475, 682.	Frequents Shaikh Abū Yaʿqūb al-Kūmī.	
586/1190	Marchena	*Fut.*, I, 277.	Meets ʿAbd al-Majīd b. Salama, *khaṭīb* of Marchena.	
586/1190	Seville	*Fut.*, II, 187.	Meets Yūsuf al-Mughāwir, one of the *bakkā'ūn*, and ʿAlī al-Salawī, '*min ahl al-ḍaḥk*'.	
586/1190	Andalusia*	*Fut.*, II, 371.	Is present at the conversion of a philosopher who had denied miracles.	
587/1191				Execution of Suhrawardī.

YEAR	PLACE	REFERENCES	BIOGRAPHICAL EVENTS	HISTORICAL EVENTS
589/1193	Algeciras	Jandī, *Sharḥ*, 220.	Has the vision of his destiny.	Death of Saladin.
—	—	*Fut.*, I, 617.	Meets Shaikh Ibn Ṭarīf, disciple of Shaikh Abū l-Rabīᶜ al-Mālaqī.	
Ramaḍān 589/1193	Ceuta	*Fut.*, I, 32.	Attends courses by the *muḥaddith* ᶜAbd Allāh al-Ḥajarī.	
590/1194	Tlemcen	*Fut.*, IV, 66, 498.	Vision of the Prophet, who reprimands him for his attitude towards Abū ᶜAbd Allāh al-Ṭarsūsī.	Castile attacks the Seville region.
—	—	*Fut.*, I, 379.	Meets the poet Abū Yazīd al-Fazāzī.	
—	Tunis	*Fut.*, I, 9.	Frequents Shaikh ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz Mahdawī.	
—	—	*Fut.*, IV, 129.	Meets the son of Ibn Qaṣī.	
—	—	*Dīwān*, 332.	Realises he is Heir to the Knowledge of the Prophet.	
—	—	*Fut.*, III, 224.	Gains access to the 'Earth of Reality'.	
—	—	*Fut.*, I, 186; & see Chapter 6.	Meets Khaḍir for the second time.	
—	—	*Fut.*, III, 338.	Composes a poem in the Great Mosque at Tunis.	
—	Seville	*Fut.*, III, 338.	Leaves for Seville and on arriving discovers that one of the *'rijāl al-ghayb'* has divulged his verses.	
—	Seville	*Fut.*, I, 222 & Chapter 5.	Death of Ibn ᶜArabī's father.	
—	Near Rota	*Fut.*, I, 186 & Chapter 5.	Third encounter with Khaḍir.	
—	Seville	Preface to the *K. al-Mashāhid.*	Writes the *Kitāb al-mashāhid al-qudsiyya.*	
591/1195	Fez	*Durra* § 3.	Leaves for Fez, where he marries off his two sisters.	
—	—	*Fut.*, III, 140.	Gains access to the 'Abode of the Pact between plants and the Pole'.	
—	—	*Fut.*, III, 186–87.	Gains access for the first time to the 'Abode of Light'.	
—	—	*Fut.*, IV, 220; III, 140.	Predicts the victory of the Almohads at Alarcos.	Victory of the Almohads at Alarcos.
591/1195	—	*Fut.*, IV, 541.	Meets Muḥ. b. Qāsim al-Tamīmī, who transmits to him traditions regarding the saints of Fez.	
592/1196	Seville	*Fut.*, I, 32.	Receives *ḥadīths* from A. b. M. al-ᶜArabī, descendant of the *qāḍī* Ibn al-ᶜArabī.	Yaᶜqūb al-Manṣūr reaches the gates of Madrid.
—	—	*K. nasab al-khirqa.*	Receives the *khirqa* from ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. ᶜAlī al-Qasṭallānī.	

YEAR	PLACE	REFERENCES	BIOGRAPHICAL EVENTS	HISTORICAL EVENTS
593/1196–97	Fez	*Fut.*, IV, 153.	Vision of all the *mawāqif* of the Last Judgement.	Ten-year truce between Yaʿqūb al-Manṣūr and Alfonso the Eighth of Castile.
593/1196–97	—	*Fut.*, I, 491; II, 486.	Gains access to the 'Abode of Light' for the second time and becomes a 'face with no nape'.	
—	—	*Fut.*, IV, 76.	Encounters the Pole of his time.	
—	—	*Fut.*, IV, 503; I, 244.	Meets M. b. Qāsim al-Tamīmī again.	
594/1197–98	—	*Fut.*, III, 345–50; *Kitāb al-isrā'*.	Ibn ʿArabī's 'Ascension', and composition of the *Kitāb al-isrā'*.	Death of Abū Madyan.
—	—	*Dīwān*, 333–37.	Realises he is the Seal of Muḥammadan Sainthood.	
—	—	*K. nasab al-khirqa*.	Receives the *khirqa* from M. b. Qāsim al-Tamīmī.	
594/1197–98	Fez	*Fut.* II, 348.	Divulges a divine secret.	
	Ceuta	—	God reproaches him and informs him He has removed the secret from the breast of those to whom he had divulged it.	
	Fez	—	Ibn ʿArabī returns to Fez with his disciple Ḥabashī to verify this.	
595/1198–99	Ronda	*K. al-kutub*, 9.	Encounter with M. b. Ashraf al-Rundī, one of the seven *abdāl*.	Death of Yaʿqūb al-Manṣūr.
—	Seville	—	Bids farewell to his masters in Seville.	
—	Cordoba	*Fut.*, I, 154.	Attends the funeral of Averroes.	Death of Averroes.
—	Granada	*Fut.*, IV, 9; I, 187.	Meets Shaikh ʿAbd Allāh.	ʿĀdil becomes sultan of Damascus.
—	Murcia	*K. al-kutub*, 10.	Bids farewell to Ibn Saydabūn.	
Ramaḍān 595/1199	Almería	*Fut.*, I, 334; IV, 263 & preface to *Mawāqiʿ*.	Composes the *Mawāqiʿ al-nujūm* in 11 days for Ḥabashī.	
597/1200	Salé	*Rūḥ*, 82.	Bids farewell to Shaikh al-Kūmī.	Death of Ibn al-Jawzī.
Muḥarram 597/ Oct.–Nov. 1200	Ījīsal	*Fut.*, II, 261.	Gains access to the 'Abode of Proximity'.	Terrible famine in Egypt.
597/1200–1	Marrakech	*Fut.*, II, 436.	Vision of the Throne. During the vision he is instructed to take M. al-Ḥaṣṣār as his companion to the East.	Earthquakes in Syria.
597/1200–1	Fez	*Fut.*, II, 436.	Meets M. al-Ḥaṣṣār.	Flooding of the Guadalquivir.
—	Bougie	*Ḥilyat al-abdāl*, 8.	Inserts a chapter concerning the heart in a copy of the *Mawāqiʿ al-nujūm*.	
—	Bougie	*K. al-bā'*, 11; *K. al-kutub*, 49.	Sees himself united with the stars and the letters of the alphabet.	

YEAR	PLACE	REFERENCES	BIOGRAPHICAL EVENTS	HISTORICAL EVENTS
598/1201	Tunis	*Fut.*, I, 98.	Frequents Shaikh ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz Mahdawī.	
—	—	*Fut.*, I, 667.	Receives a tablet from the treasury of the Kaᶜba.	
—	—	*Fut.*, I, 98; *Rūḥ* § 9.	Final departure from the Muslim West for the East.	
Ramaḍān 598/1202	Cairo	*Rūḥ* §§ 9, 10.	Is reunited with M. al-Khayyāṭ and his brother A. al-Ḥarīrī (or Ḥarrār).	
598/1202	Hebron	*Fut.*, I, 10.	Meditates at the grave of Abraham.	
598/1202	Jerusalem	— —	Prays in al-Aqṣā Mosque.	
—	Medina	— —	Visits the tomb of the Prophet.	
598/1202	Mecca	*Khuṭba* of the *Fut.*	Sees himself consecrated as Seal of Muḥammadan Sainthood.	
—	—	*Fut.*, I, 47–51.	Meets the *fatā al-fā'it* and reads in him the spiritual secrets which will be recorded in the *Futūḥāt.*	
—	—	Preface to the *Tarjumān.*	Close association with Abū Shujāᶜ b. Rostem, imām of the sanctuary of Abraham, and his daughter Niẓām, who inspires the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq.*	
599/1202–3	—	*K. nasab al-khirqa.*	Receives the *khirqa* from Yūnus b. Yaḥyā al-Hāshimī.	
—	—	*Fut.*, I, 318–19.	Vision of the Kaᶜba made of gold and silver bricks.	
—	—	*Fut.*, I, 638; II, 15.	Encounter with the spirit of the son of Hārūn al-Rashīd.	
—	—	*Fut.* I, 603; II, 262.	Meets Mūsā al Qurṭubī, muezzin of the *ḥaram.*	
—	—	R.G. 480; preface to the *Mishkāt.*	Writes the *Mishkāt al-anwār.*	Malik ᶜĀdil receives the *futuwwa* investiture.
12 Jumādā I 599/1203	Taif	Preface to the *Ḥilyat al-abdāl.*	Meditates at the tomb of ᶜAbd Allāh Ibn ᶜAbbās. Writes the *Ḥilyat al-abdāl.*	
Rabīᶜ I 600/Nov. 1203	Mecca	Preface and conclusion to the *Rūḥ* R.G. 630, *samāᶜ* § 4.	Writes the *Rūḥ al-quds* and reads the work to seventeen disciples including Ḥabashī and Qūnawī's father.	
600/1203–4	Mecca	Preface to *Tāj al-rasā'il; Fut.* I, 700–1.	Dispute with the Kaᶜba; composition of the *Tāj al-rasā'il.*	The Crusaders take Constantinople.
24 Dhū l-Ḥijja 600/1204	Mecca	R.G. 736, *samāᶜ* § 1.	Reading of the *Tāj al-rasā'il* before Ḥabashī and Qūnawī's father.	
601/1204	Medina	*Fut.*, IV, 193.	Visits the tomb of the Prophet.	Death of Maimonides. A fire ravages the caliph's palace in Baghdad. The Franks attack Hama and recapture Sidon.

YEAR	PLACE	REFERENCES	BIOGRAPHICAL EVENTS	HISTORICAL EVENTS
601/1204	Jerusalem	R.G. 26, 68, 169, 205.	Writes the *Kitāb al-jalāla*, the *Kitāb al-azal*, the *Kitāb al-alif* and the *Kitāb al-hū*.	
601/1204–5	Baghdad	R.G. 639, *samāᶜ*s §§ 1,5.	Reads the *Rūḥ* to Ibn Sukayna. Leaves for Anatolia accompanied by Qūnawī's father.	
601/1204–5	Mosul	*Muḥāḍarat*, I, 7; II, 184; *Fut.*, III, 17.	Meets Thābit b. ᶜAntar, imitator of the Qur'ān.	
—	—	R.G. 762.	Writes the *Kitāb al-Tanazzulāt al-mawṣiliyya*.	
601/1204–5	Mosul	*Muḥāḍarat*, I, 237; II, 240, 259; *Fut.*, IV, 490.	Receives *ḥadīths* from A. b. Masᶜūd al-Mawṣilī.	
—	—	*K. nasab al-khirqa*.	Receives the *khirqa khaḍiriyya* from ᶜAlī b. Jāmiᶜ, disciple of Qaḍīb al-Bān.	
29 Ramaḍān 601/1205	—	R.G. 639, *samāᶜ* § 7.	Reading of the *Rūḥ* to nine disciples including Ḥabashī and Qūnawī's father.	
602/1205	Konya	R.G. 28, 33, 78.	Writes the *R. al-anwār*, the *K. al-ᶜaẓama* and the *K. al-amr al-muḥkam*.	Genghis Khan reaches the Yellow River.
Ṣafar 602/1205	Konya	*K. al-amr al-muḥkam*, trans. Palacios, 236.	Meets Shaikh Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī.	
602/1205	Damascus	*Fut.*, I, 250; & Chapter 9.	Meets Masᶜūd al-Ḥabashī, a 'madman of God'.	
602/1205–06	Jerusalem	R.G. 297, 511, 548.	Writes the *K. al-ᶜiqd*, the *K. al-nuqabā'* and the *K. al-muqniᶜ*.	
Wednesday 14 Shawwāl 602/1206	Hebron	R.G. 834.	Writes the *K. al-yaqīn*.	
19 Shaᶜbān 603/1207	Cairo	*samāᶜ* § 9 of the *Rūḥ*.	Reading of the work before six listeners including Ḥabashī, Ibn Sawdakīn and A. al-Ḥarīrī (or al-Ḥarrār).	Genghis Khan has himself proclaimed Emperor by the Turks and Mongols.
603/1207	The East*	R.G. 177, 412.	Writes the *K. manzil al-manāzil al-fahwaniyya* and the *K. jawāb . . . Tirmidhī*.	
604/1207–8	Mecca	*Fut.*, II, 376, 407.	Meets Abū Shujāᶜ b. Rostem, Imām of the Maqām Ibrāhīm.	Suhrawardī is sent to Damascus by the caliph.
—	—	*K. al-mubashshirāt*, f° 91 b.	Vision of the Prophet regarding the two *rakᶜa* following the *ṭawāf*.	
606/1209	Aleppo	R.G. 738, *samāᶜ* § 2.	Reading of the *K. al-Tajalliyāt*.	Malik Ẓāhir rebuilds the citadel of Aleppo.
Shawwāl 606/1210	The East*	*Nafḥ*, II, 175.	Studies Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* with Abū l-Ḥasan b. Abī al-Biǰā'ī.	
608/1212	Baghdad	*Al-Mukhtaṣar . . . Ibn Dubaythī*, Baghdad edition, 1951, p. 103.	Meets the historian Ibn Dubaythī (*d.* 637/1239).	
11 Ramaḍān 608/1212	Baghdad	*Fut.*, II, 529–30.	Vision of the divine *makr*.	

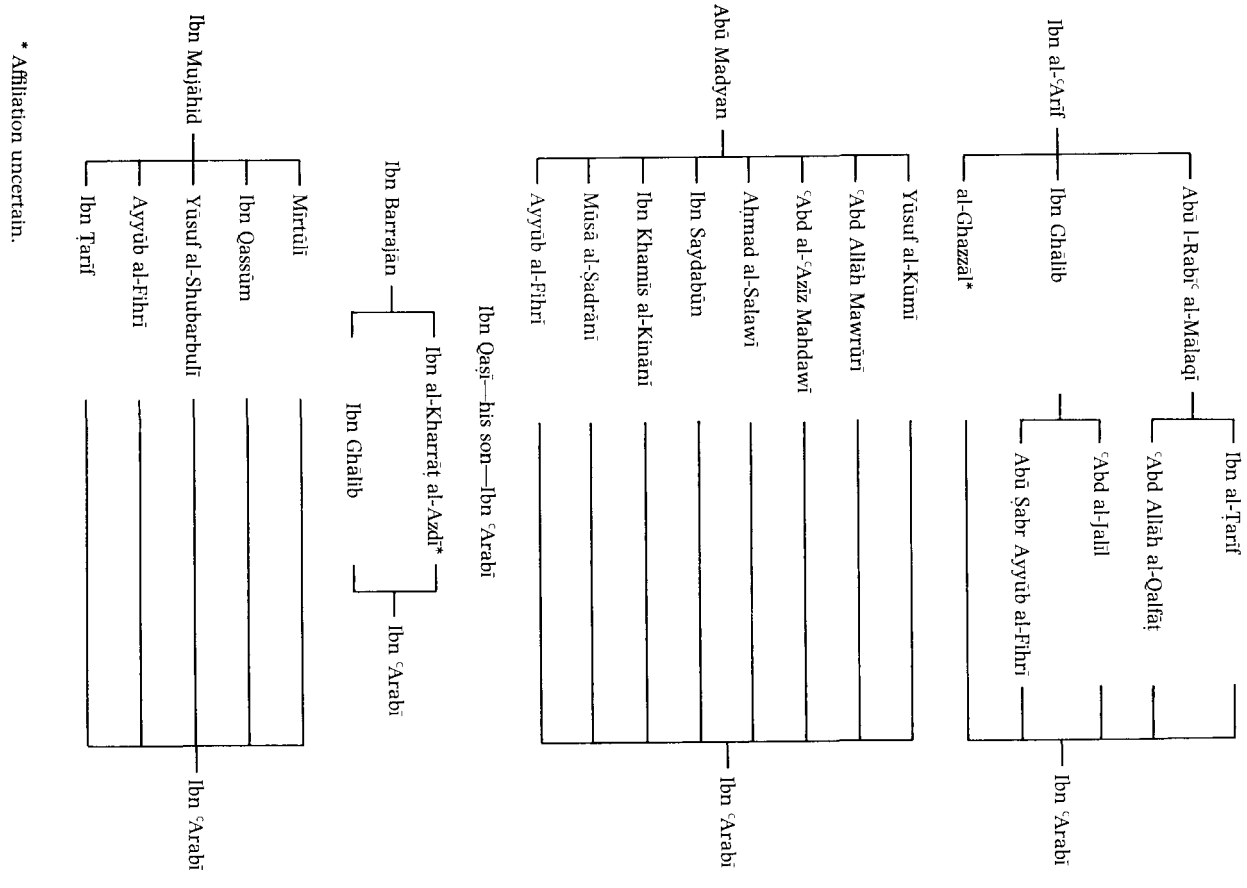
YEAR	PLACE	REFERENCES	BIOGRAPHICAL EVENTS	HISTORICAL EVENTS
609/1212	The East*	*Muḥāḍarat*, II, 260; *Fut.*, IV, 547.	Corresponds with the Seljuq king Kaykā'ūs.	The Christians are victorious at Las Navas de Tolosa.
610/1213	Aleppo	Preface to Ibn Sawdakīn's commentary on the *Tajalliyāt*.	Reading of and commentary on the *Tajalliyāt*.	
Rajab, Shaᶜbān, Ramaḍān 611/end 1214, early 1215	Mecca	Preface to the *Tarjumān*.	Writes the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*.	Genghis Khan takes Peking.
611/1215	Aleppo	*Dhakhā'ir al-aᶜlāq*, preface.	Writes the commentary on the *Tarjumān* at the request of Ḥabashī and Ibn Sawdakīn.	
Ramaḍān 612/1216	Siwas	*Muḥāḍarat*, II, 241.	Vision of the victory of Kaykā'ūs at Antioch.	Death of Malik Ẓāhir, King of Aleppo. Arrival of the Fifth Crusade.
End Ram. 612	Malatya	*Muḥāḍarat*, II, 241.	Writes to Kaykā'ūs to tell him of the vision.	
10 Shaᶜbān 613/1216	Malatya	R.G. 736, *samāᶜ* § 2.	Reading of the *Tāj al-rasā'il* to several disciples.	
615/1218	—	*samāᶜ* §3 of the *Rūḥ*.	Reading of the *Rūḥ* to several disciples.	Deaths of Malik ᶜĀdil and Kaykā'ūs. Muᶜaẓẓam becomes King of Damascus.
10 Ṣafar 615/1218	—	End of *Iṣṭilāḥāt*.	Writes the *Iṣṭilāḥāt ṣūfiyya*.	
616/1219				Saint Francis of Assisi goes to Egypt. The Crusaders take Damietta.
617/1220	Aleppo	R.G. 70, *samāᶜ* § 1; R.G. 414, 462.	Reading of the *K. al-ᶜaẓāma*, *K. maqām* and *K. al-mīm* to the 'fourteen apostles'.	The Mongols invade Persia.
618/1221	Aleppo	R.G. 412, *samāᶜ* § 1.	Reading of the *K. manzil al-manāzil* to three disciples including Ibn Sawdakīn and M. b. Baranqush al-Muᶜẓẓamī, son-in-law of Ibn ᶜArabī.	Failure of the Fifth Crusade. The Muslims recapture Damietta.
618/1221	Malatya	*Nafḥ*, II, 170.	Birth of Ibn ᶜArabī's younger son, Muḥammad Saᶜd al-Dīn. Death of his companion Badr al-Ḥabashī.	Death of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā.
619/1222				The Mongols take Kabul.
620/1223	Syria		Settles permanently in Syria.	Frederick the Second's expedition to Africa; he deports the Muslims from Sicily.
18 Jumādā I 620/June 1223	Damascus	*Dīwān*, 91.	Vision regarding Ibn Sawdakīn.	
621/1224	Damascus	R.G. 834, *samāᶜ* § 1; R.G. 26, 219, 386, 418, 462, 551, 689.	Reading of the *K. al-yaqīn*, *K. maqṣad al-asmā'*, *K. al-mīm*, etc. to Ayyūb b. Badr al-Muqri'.	
622/1225				Death of Caliph Nāṣir.

YEAR	PLACE	REFERENCES	BIOGRAPHICAL EVENTS	HISTORICAL EVENTS
623/1226				Death of Saint Francis of Assisi.
20 Rabīᶜ I 624/1227	Damascus	*K. al-mubashshirāt.*	Vision of the Prophet, concerning angels' superiority over men.	Death of Genghis Khan. Death of Muᶜaẓẓam, Nāṣir Dāwūd, Sultan of Damascus.
23 Dhū l-Qaᶜda 624/1227	Damascus	*K. al-mubashshirāt.*	Vision of the Prophet, concerning the resurrection of animals.	
625/1228	Syria*	R.G. 736.	Writes the *K. thawāb qaḍā' al-ḥawā'ij.*	
22 Dhū l-Ḥijja 626/Nov. 1229	Syria*	R.G. 2, *samāᶜ* § 1.	Reading of the *K. al-ᶜabādila* to several disciples including Qūnawī and Ibn Sawdakīn.	Damascus besieged by Kāmil and Ashraf. Kāmil hands Jerusalem over to Frederick the Second. Ashraf becomes King of Damascus.
End Muḥarram 627/Dec. 1229	Damascus	*Fuṣūṣ*, I, p. 47.	Vision of the Prophet, who hands him the book of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam.*	Death of Farīd al-Dīn Aṭṭār.
4 Rabīᶜ II 627/Feb. 1230	Syria*	*Fut.* II, 449.	Vision of the Divine Ipseity.	
627/1230	Damascus	R.G. 142, *samāᶜ* § 2; R.G. 414, R.G. 70.	Writes the *Fihris* for Qūnawī and gives him several *samāᶜ*s.	
628/1231	Damascus	R.G. 639 and R.G. 313.	Gives Qūnawī a *samāᶜ* of the *Rūḥ* and the *K. al-isrā'*.	The Mongols conquer Iran. Shaikh ᶜAlī al-Ḥarīrī is imprisoned in Damascus.
20 Rabīᶜ I 628/1231	Syria*	*K. al-mubashshirāt.*	Vision in which God speaks to him on Mount Sinai as He had spoken to Moses.	
628/1231	Syria*	R.G. 26, 619.	Gives ᶜAbd al-Karīm al-Bazzār a *samāᶜ* of the *K. al-jalāla* and *K. al-alif.*	
Ṣafar 629/ Dec. 1231	Damascus	R.G. 135.	Finishes the first draft of the *Futūḥāt.*	
9 Jumādā I 629/March 1232	Syria*	*K. al-mubashshirāt*, MS. Fatih 5322, f° 92.	Vision in which Ibn ᶜArabī is told he will have a thousand spiritual children.	
630/1233	Damascus	*Āthār al-bilād*, Göttingen ed., 1848, p. 334.	Meets the geographer Qazwīnī, author of the *Athār al-bilād.*	
630/1233	Damascus	R.G. 150.	Reading of the *Fuṣūṣ* to Qūnawī.	
630/1233	Syria*	R.G. 484, *samāᶜ* § 1.	Reading of the *K. al-muᶜashsharāt* to Qūnawī, ᶜImād al-Dīn Ibn al-ᶜArabī, Ibn Arabī's elder son, and several other disciples.	
632/1234–35	Syria*		Begins the second draft of the *Futūḥāt.*	Death of Suhrawardī, author of the *ᶜAwārif al-maᶜārif.*
1st Muḥarram 632/26-09-1234	Damascus	*Ijāza li l-Malik . . .*, preface.	Grants an *ijāza* for his works to Malik al-Ashraf, King of Damascus.	

YEAR	PLACE	REFERENCES	BIOGRAPHICAL EVENTS	HISTORICAL EVENTS
6 Rajab 633/1236	Syria*	*Fut.*, II, 204	Discussion with God regarding the attribution of acts.	Cordoba is recaptured by the Christians.
633/1236	Syria*	R.G. 736, *samāᶜ* § 3; R.G. 67, *samāᶜ* § 2; R.G. 414, *samāᶜ* § 3; *samāᶜ*s for the *Fut.*	Grants a considerable number of *samāᶜ*s to an ever-increasing audience.	
634/1237	Damascus	R.G. 102	Composes the *Dīwān.*	
634/1237	—	R.G. 135.	Gives several *samāᶜ*s for the *Futūḥāt.*	
635/1237–38	—	R.G. 18, 256, 262, 288, 342, 555, 587.	Writes a number of treatises.	Ashraf dies. Kāmil besieges Damascus. Jawād becomes Sultan of Damascus. Death of Kāmil.
636/1238–39	—	R.G. 80, 472, 539, 685.	Writes these works.	
24 Rabīᶜ I 636/1238	Damascus	*Fut.*, IV, 553.	Completes the second draft of the *Futūḥāt.*	
637/1239–40	—	R.G. 135.	Grants a considerable number of *samāᶜ*s for the *Futūḥāt.*	Malik Ṣāliḥ Ismāᶜīl takes Damascus.
10 Rabīᶜ I 638/ ct. 1240	—	R.G. 762, *samāᶜ* § 1.	Reads the *Tanazzulāt mawṣiliyya* to Ayyūb b. Badr al-Muqrī'.	The Mongols destroy Kiev.
22 Rabīᶜ II 638/Nov. 1240	—	*Tarājim*, p. 170.	Death of the Shaikh al-Akbar; he is buried in the *turbe* of the Banū Zakī.	

2

Ibn ᶜArabī and his links with the various Sufi currents in the Muslim West



3

The teachers in traditional religious disciplines frequented by Ibn ʿArabī in the Muslim West

Here is a list of the teachers in the traditional religious disciplines whom Ibn ʿArabī frequented; it is based for the most part on the *Ijāza*, and sometimes supplemented by information preserved in other works. The names of *ʿulamā'* of minor importance are preceded by two asterisks; if famous, by three. Where possible their names are followed by date of death, some indication of the teaching given, the number of the corresponding entry in Ibn al-Abbār's *Takmila* (*Tak.* = the Codera edition; *Tak.* b. = the edition by A. Bel and M. Bencheneb, Algiers, 1910), by the reference in the *Ijāza* (*Ij.*) and finally by references in other of Ibn ʿArabī's works. When the teacher in question is also a Sufi, his name is followed by a rectangle □.

*** ʿAbd Allāh (Abū M. b. ʿUbayd Allāh al-Ḥajarī[1]: (*d.* 591/1194); *ḥadīth; Tak.* § 1416; *Ij.*, p.180; *Fut.*, I, p.32; III, p.334.

** ʿAbd Allāh (Abū M.) al-Tādilī: (*d.* 597/1200); *qirā'āt; Tak.* § 1491; *Ij.*, p.173.

** ʿAbd al-Jalīl b. Mūsā[2] □: (*d.* 608/1211); *tafsīr; ḥadīth; Tak.* § 1818; *Ij.*, p.181; *Durra*, in *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.160.

*** ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (Abū Zayd) al-Suhaylī[3]: (*d.* 581/1185); *ḥadīth; Sīrā; Tak.* § 1613; *Ij.*, p.181; *Mawāqiʿ al-nujūm*, p.90; *Muḥāḍarat*, I, pp.6, 72, 236.

Abū Bakr b. Ḥasan[4]: *qāḍī* in Murcia, *Ij.*, p.180.

*** Ayyūb (Abū Ṣabr) al-Fihri[5] □: (*d.* 609/1212); *ḥadīth; Tak.* b. § 536; *Ij.*, p.180; *Fut.*, III, p.334.

*** Ibn Abī Jamāra: (*d.* 599/1202); *qirā'āt; Tak.* § 870; *Ij.*, p.174.

** Ibn al-ʿArabī (Abū Wā'il or Abū Walīd): *ḥadīth; Ij.*, p.117; *Fut.*, I, p.32; *Rūḥ*, p.22.

** Ibn al-ʿĀṣ (M. b. A.) al-Bājī[6] □: *fiqh; Tak.* § 798; *Fut.*, I, p.400; *Muḥāḍarat*, I, p.144; *Rūḥ* § 39, p.123; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.152.

*** Ibn al-Faras (ʿAbd al-Munʿim b. M.) al-Khazrajī[7]: (*d.* 597/1200); *Tak.*, § 1814; *Ij.*, p.180.

1. Ibn ʿArabī attended his lectures at Ceuta in the month of Ramaḍān 589 (cf. *Fut.* I, p.32; III, p.334). 2. See the sketch in *Tashawwuf* § 241, p.416.

3. Cf. also *GAL*, S.I., 733. 4. It has not proved possible to identify this person.

5. For Shaikh Fihrī cf. *Tashawwuf* § 240 and Ibn Qunfudh, *Uns al-faqīr*, p.32. Ibn ʿArabī attended his lectures at Ceuta at the same time as he attended Ḥajarī's.

6. Ibn ʿArabī refers to him as *faqīh zāhid*. For Ibn al-ʿĀṣ cf. *Tashawwuf*, p.216, Ṣafī al-Dīn, *Risāla*, p.83 (where he is described as a 'jurist, traditionist and saint'), and the biobibliographical sketch, p.229.

7. According to the compilers Ibn al-Faras—who was *qāḍī* several times—excelled in poetry, philology and *fiqh*. We do not know which of these subjects he taught to Ibn ʿArabī.

*** Ibn al-Kharrāṭ (ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq) al-Ishbīlī[8]: (*d.* 581/1185); *ḥadīth; Tak.* § 1805; *Ij.*, p.174; *Fut.*, I, p.649; II, p.302.

*** Ibn Miqdam (A. b. M.) al-Ruʿaynī: (*d.* 604/1207); *ḥadīth, Tak.* b. § 252; *Fut.*, I, p.649.

** Ibn al-Ṣā'igh (Yaḥyā b. M.) al-Anṣārī[9]□: (*d.* 600/1203); *ḥadīth; Tak.*, § 2070; *Ij.*, p.181; *Fut.*, IV, p.489; II, p.528; III, p.334; *Rūḥ*, § 38, p.123; *Sufis of Andalusia*, p.136.

*** Ibn al-Sharrāṭ (ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ghālib): (*d.* 586/1190); Qur'ān; *qirā'āt; Tak.* § 1620; *Ij.*, p.173.

** Ibn Samḥūn (ʿAbd al-Wadūd)[10]: (*d.* 608/1211); *Tak.* b. '§ 259; *Ij.*, p.180.

*** Ibn Zarqūn (M. b. Saʿīd) al-Anṣārī : (*d.* 586/1190); *ḥadīth; Tak.* § 824; *Ij.*, p.174.

** Jābir b. Ayyūb al-Ḥaḍramī[11]: (*d.* 587/1191 or 596/1219); *ḥadīth; Tak.* § 3; *Ij.*, p.178; *Fut.*, I, p.649; *Muḥāḍarat*, I, p.26.

Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Ukht al-Muqri'[12]: *Ij.*, p.181; *Muḥāḍarat*, I, p.201.

Muḥammad b. ʿIshshūn[13]: *Fut.*, I, p.32; *Rūḥ*, pp.22, 34.

** Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Fāsī □: (*d.* 603/1206); *Tak.* § 1064; *Ij.*, p.180; *Fut.*, I, p.244; IV, pp.503, 541, 549; *Muḥāḍarat*, I, p.6.

** Muḥammad b. Ṣāf al-Lakhmī: (*d.* 585.1189); Qur'ān; *qirā'āt; Tak.*, § 821; *Ij.*, p.173; *Fut.*, I, pp.331, 425, 649; IV, p.550.

** Mūsā b. ʿImrān al-Mīrtūlī □: (*d.* 604/1207) *zuhd; Tak.* § 2147; *Ij.*, p.181; *Fut.*, II, pp.6, 13, 81, 177, 201; *Rūḥ*, § 8.

** Yaḥyā b. Abī ʿAlī al-Zawāwī[14] □: (*d.* 611/12→14); *ʿUnwān al-dirāya* § 29, pp.135ff; *Rūḥ*, § 42; *Fut.*, II, pp.21, 637.

8. It is difficult to determine whether or not Ibn ʿArabī met this famous *khaṭīb* in Bougie. In the *Ijāza* he states that ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq transmitted to him all his works on *ḥadīth* (*ḥaddathanī bi jamīʿ muṣannafātihi*); but Ibn al-Kharrāṭ died in the Maghreb during the revolt by the Banū Ghāniyya in 581 (cf. *Muʿjib*, p.197) and, as Ibn ʿArabī did not visit the Maghreb until 589, this would suggest that Ibn al-Kharrāṭ himself must have gone to Andalusia. However, none of our sources appears to mention such a journey by Ibn al-Kharrāṭ; and, what is more, in the *Muḥāḍarat al-abrār* (I, p.26) Ibn ʿArabī specifies that he received *ḥadīths* from Ibn al-Kharrāṭ by correspondence (*kitābatan*).

9. Ibn ʿArabī refers to him as a *muḥaddith ṣūfī*, and specifies that he studied *ḥadīth* with him at Ceuta in his house. Sketch 198 in the *Tashawwuf* (p.377) is devoted to him.

10. Ibn Samḥūn was *qāḍī* of Almuñecar; the correct reading is *al-munakkab*, not *al-maktab* as given by Badawī in *Ijāza*, p.180.

11. In the *Ijāza* Ibn ʿArabī simply says that he received from him an *ijāza ʿāmma*, but in the *Kitāb al-muḥāḍarat* he specifies that he spent time in his company in Seville.

12. Unidentified. 13. Unidentified.

14. In the *Rūḥ* Ibn ʿArabī describes Zawāwī as a scholar and an ascetic; he studied his works and performed a one-day retreat (*khalwa*) with him. According to Ghubrīnī (*ʿUnwān al-dirāya*, § 29), Zawāwī used to give lectures in *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*.

4

The men of letters frequented by Ibn ʿArabī

—— Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Wazaʿī: (*d.* 610/1213); *adīb*, poet. Ibn ʿArabī met him on several occasions in Cordoba. Cf. *Ij.*, p.180; *Muḥāḍarat*, I, pp.3, 256; II, p.236.

—— ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Jilyānī: (*d.* 602/1205 in Damascus); *adīb*, poet, doctor; *Tak.* § 1815. Ibn ʿArabī does not specify whether he met him in the West or in the East. *Fut.*, II, p.129.

—— ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (Abū Zayd) al-Fazāzī: (*d.* 627/1230); poet, with a leaning towards Sūfism;[1] *Tak.*, § 1641. Ibn ʿArabī met him at Tlemcen in 590; *Fut.*, I, p.379.

—— Ibn Abī Rakab (Abū Dharr al-Khashanī): (*d.* 604/1207); poet, philologist, *faqīh*, *khaṭīb* of Seville and then *qāḍī* of Jaén; *Tak.* '§ 1098. Ibn ʿArabī met him at Seville at an *adab* lecture and called him *'sayyidī'*; *Muḥāḍarat*, I, pp.127, 129, II, p.247.

—— Ibn Farqad (A. b. Ibr): (*d.* 624/1227); poet; *qāḍī* at Granada and Salé; *Tak.* b. § 288; recited poems to Ibn ʿArabī; *Muḥāḍarat*, II, pp.98–99.

—— Ibn Jubayr (Abū l-Ḥasan M. b. A.): (*d.* 614/1207); Andalusian man of letters, author of the famous *Riḥla*, cf. *EI*² s.v. Ibn ʿArabī knew him in Cordoba; *Fut.*, I, p.154.

—— Ibn Kharūf (ʿAlī b. M.) al-Ishbīlī²: (*d.* 603/1206 or 609/1212); *adīb*, linguist, *mutakallim*, grammarian; *Tak.* § 1884; Ibn Zubayr, *Ṣilat al-ṣilat*, §§ 232, 245. Ibn ʿArabī spent time with him in Cordoba; *Muḥāḍarat*, II, pp.63, 236.

—— Ibn Muḥriz (M. b. A.): (*d.* 655/1258); philologist, historian, *muḥaddith*; cf. *ʿUnwan al-dirāya*, § 92, pp.241–45. Ibn ʿArabī knew him in Cordoba; *Muḥāḍarat*, II, p.178.

—— Ibn Zaydān (ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAlī): (*d.* 624/1227); scholar-poet; *muḥaddith*; *Tak.*, § 1771. He was a companion of Ibn ʿArabī in Fez; *Fut.*, II, p.514.

—— Ibn Zuhr (Abū Bakr al-ḥafīd): (*d.* 595/1199); a member of the eminent family of doctors, cf. *EI*² s.v. Ibn Zuhr. Ibn ʿArabī frequented his company at Cordoba; *Muḥāḍarat*, II, p.178 and Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-anbā'*, 1884 edition, Königsberg, II, pp.66–70.

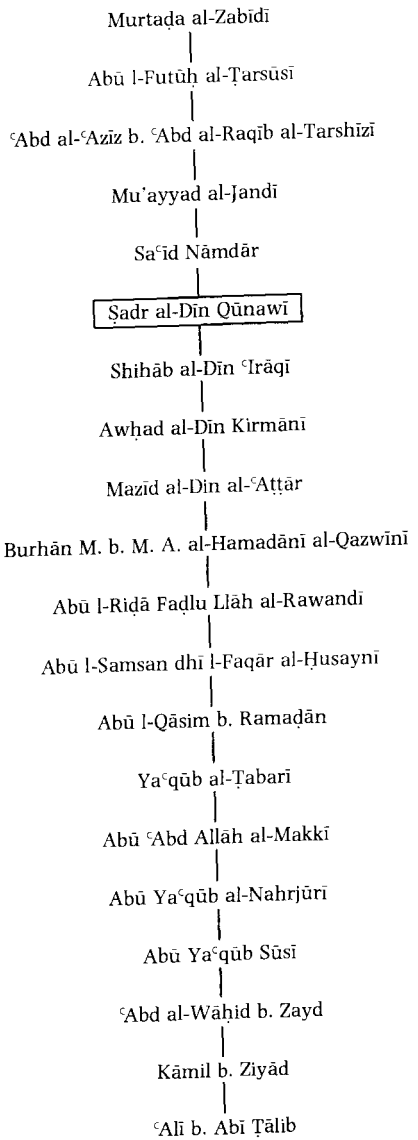
1. So Ibn al-Abbār and Aḥmad Bābā (*Nayl*, in the margin of the *Dībāj*), p.163.

2. Two individuals who were contemporaries of each other both had this name (with the same *ism* and the same *kunya*); the biographers generally distinguish between them by designating them as Ibn Kharūf *al-naḥwī* and Ibn Kharūf *al-shāʿir* (the 'grammarian' and the 'poet') respectively. Ibn ʿArabī simply speaks of 'Ibn Kharūf *al-adīb*', which could apply to them both, and this makes it impossible to identify him.

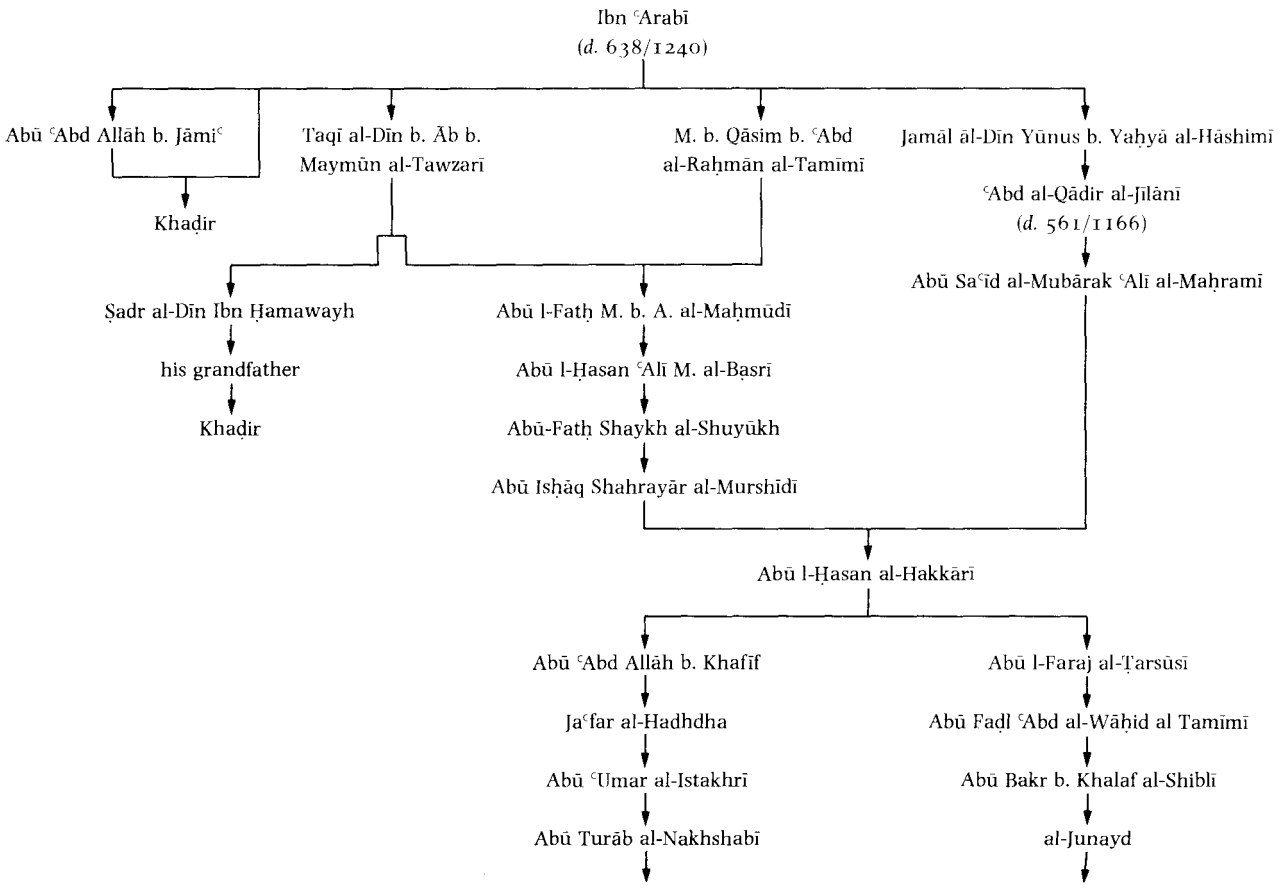
5

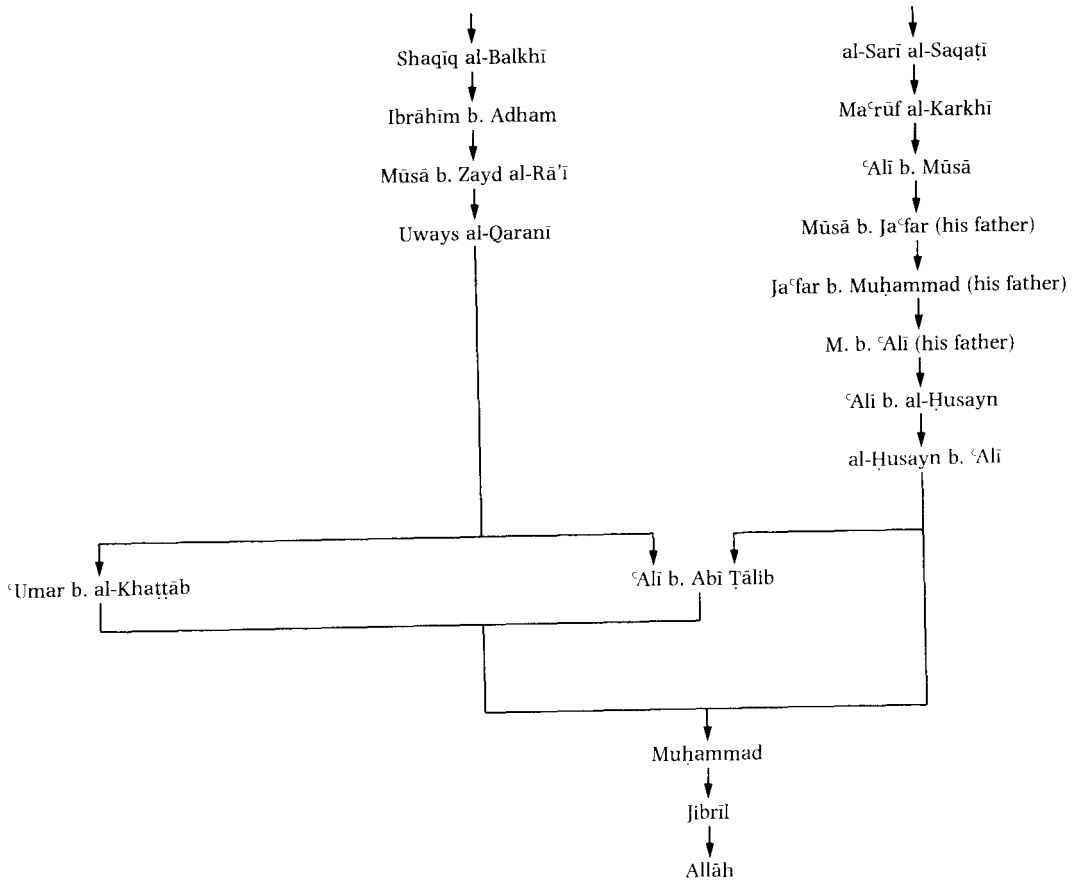
The four *silsilas*

The *silsila* of the *khirqa akbariyya* according to Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, based on the *ʿIqd al-jawhar al-thamīn* (s.v. *qāsimiyya*) and the *Itḥāf al-aṣfiyā'* (s.v. *ṣadriyya*)

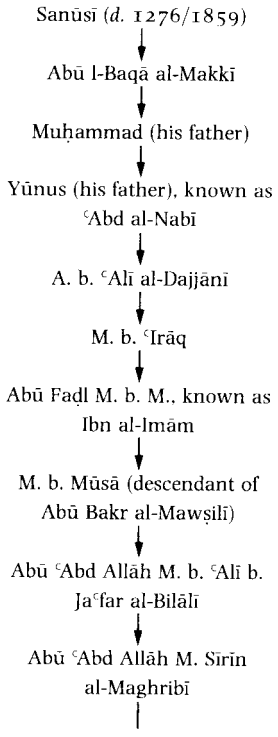


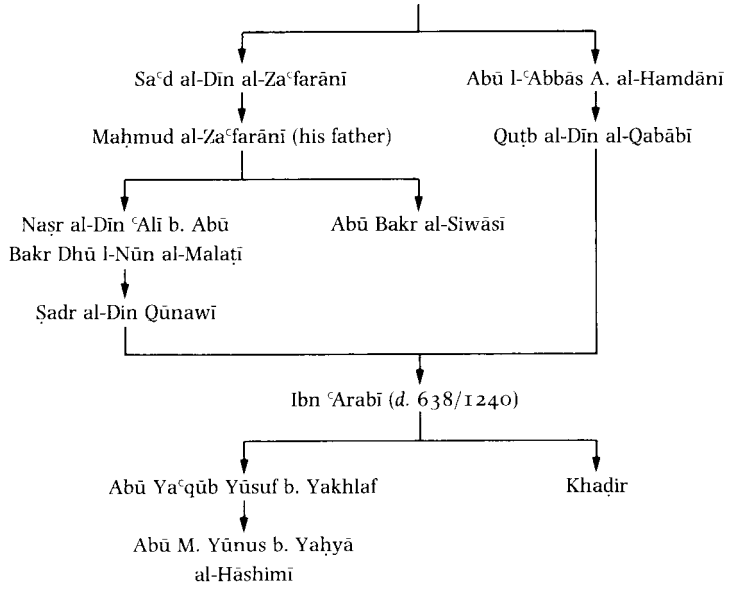
The *silsila* of the *khirqa akbariyya* according to Ibn ʿArabī, based on the *Kitāb nasab al-khirqa*, MS. Efendi, ff^{os} 96–98 and *Fut.*, I. p.187



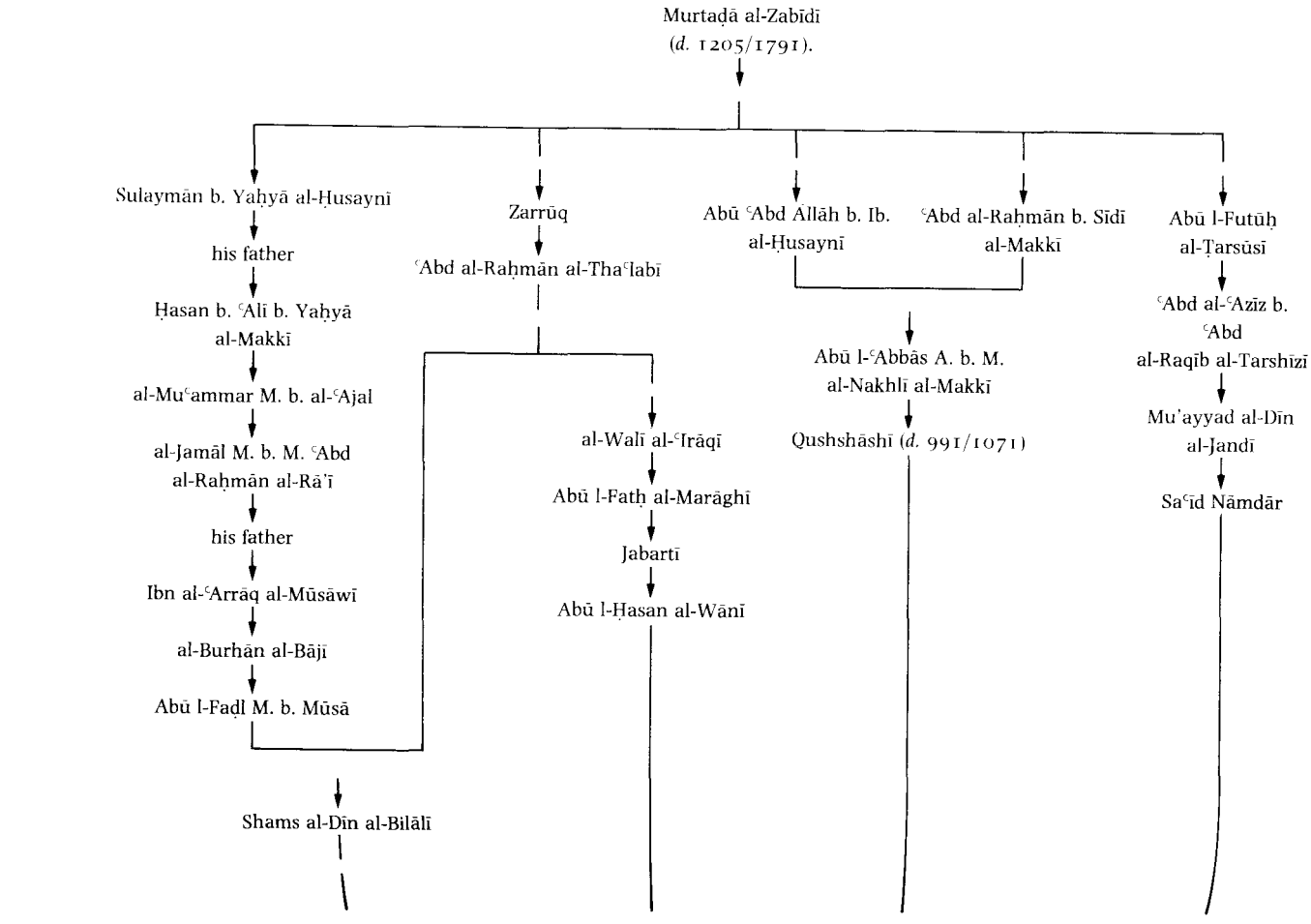


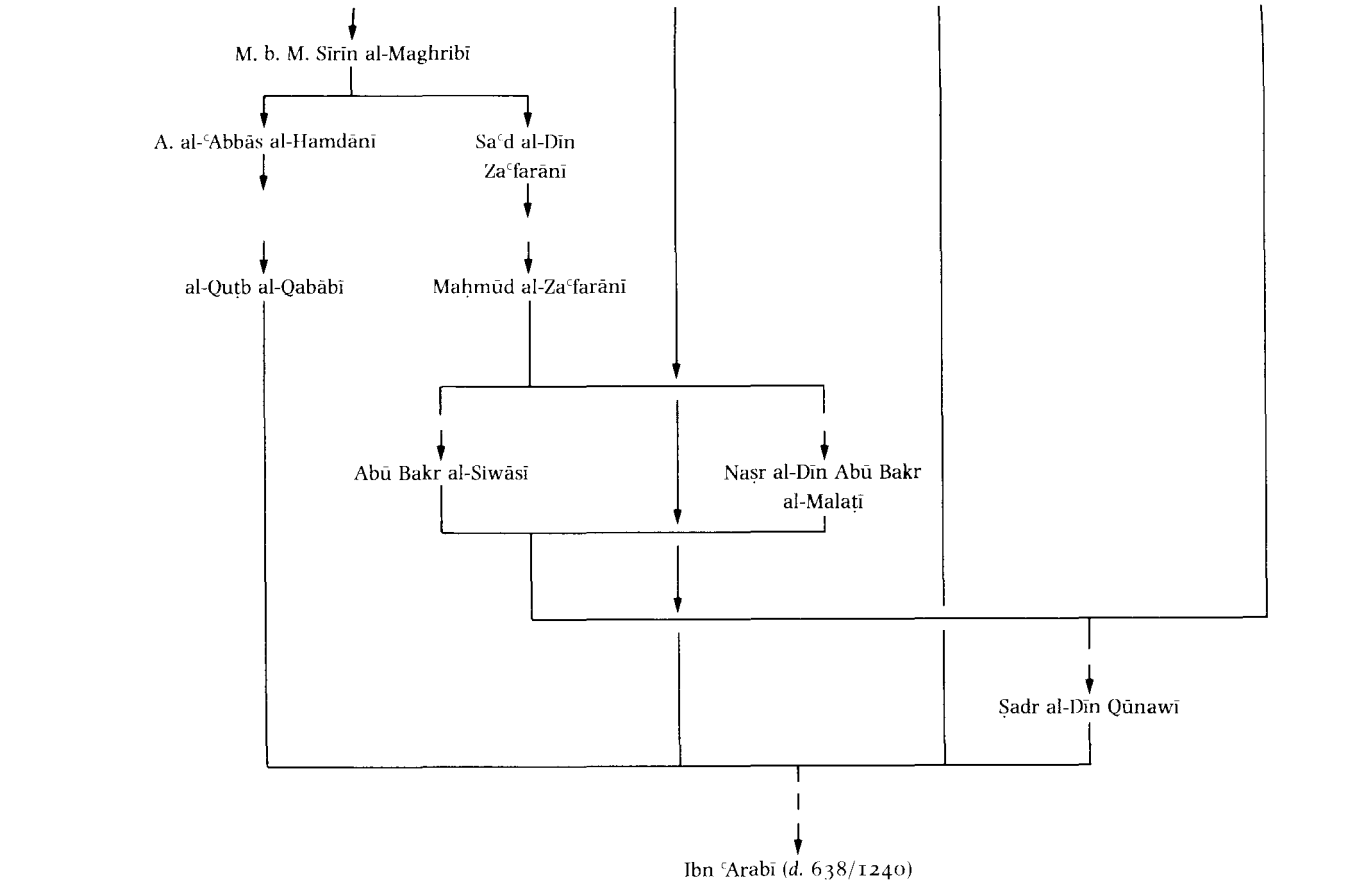
The *silsila* of the *khirqa akbariyya* according to Shaikh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Sanūsī (*d.* 1276/1859), based on the *Salsabīl al-muʿīn fīl-ṭarāʾiq al-arbaʿīn* (in the margin of the Cairo edition of *al-Masāʾil al-ʿAshr*, 1353H, pp.70–2).


Sanūsī (d. 1276/1859)
Abū l-Baqā al-Makkī
Muḥammad (his father)
Yūnus (his father), known as ʿAbd al-Nabī
A. b. ʿAlī al-Dajjānī
M. b. ʿIrāq
Abū Fadl M. b. M., known as Ibn al-Imām
M. b. Mūsā (descendant of Abū Bakr al-Mawṣilī)
Abū ʿAbd Allāh M. b. ʿAlī b. Jaʿfar al-Bilālī
Abū ʿAbd Allāh M. Sīrīn al-Maghribī


Saʿd al-Dīn al-Zaʿfarānī
Abū l-ʿAbbās A. al-Hamdānī
Maḥmud al-Zaʿfarānī (his father)
Quṭb al-Dīn al-Qabābī
Naṣr al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Abū Bakr Dhū l-Nūn al-Malaṭī
Abū Bakr al-Siwāsī
Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī
Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240)
Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf b. Yakhlaf
Khaḍir
Abū M. Yūnus b. Yaḥyā al-Hāshimī

The *silsila* of the *khirqa akbariyya* according to Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī. Sources: ᶜ*Iqd al-jawhar al-thamīn* (s.v. *uwaysiyya*; Ibn ᶜArrāq) and the *Itḥāf al-aṣfiyā'* (s.v. *ḥātimiyya, ṣadriyya*).





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—*k. Mashāhid al-asrār al-qudsiyya*, MS. B.N. 6102, ff^{os} 1–28b.

—*k. Nasab al-khirqa*, MS. Esad Efendi 1507, ff^{os} 87–97b.

—*Ibid.*, MS. Yahya Efendi 2415, ff^{os} 1–3b.

—*k. Natāʾij al-adhkār*, MS. Fatih 5322, ff^{os} 53b–60b.

—*k. Naẓm al-futūḥ al-makkī*, MS. Aḥmadiyya, Aleppo, 774.

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Glossary and Index of Technical Terms

Page numbers for Arabic terms are only given in the case of references that help to clarify the meaning of the term in question.

ᶜabd, servant, slave 62, 195, 281
abdāl (plural of *badal*), substitutes 72 n.178, 89, 113, 125, 135, 161, 216, 222 n.19, 297, 301, 303, 304
adab, propriety, rules of propriety, right conduct, edificatory literature 62, 94, 100–2, 147, 163, 270
afrād (plur. of *fard*), solitary ones, the alone 65, 67 n.153, 71–3, 77–8, 126, 175 with n.25
aḥadiyya, oneness, unicity 279
ᶜahd, commitment, pledge, covenant 47
aḥkām (plur. of *ḥukm*), properties, judgements, rulings, prescriptions 99
aḥwāl (plur. of *ḥāl*), state, mystical state 9
akhbār (plur. of *khabar*), traditions, stories 223, 250
ᶜālam al-ghayb, world of hidden things, world of spirits or angels, 158 n.113, 215
ᶜālam al-khayāl, world of the imagination, the imaginal world 10, 47
ᶜālam al-shahāda, world of the visible, world of manifestation 158 n.113, 195
ᶜālim, knowing, knowledgeable 206, 280
amāna, deposition, something put in someone's care 219
anbiyā' (plur. of *nabī*), prophets 201, 277
ᶜaql, intellect, mind, reason 104–6, 231
arḍ Allāh, God's earth 117–18, 198
arḍ al-ḥaqīqa, earth of reality 117
ᶜārif (plur. *ᶜārifūn*), knower, gnostic 64, 91, 105, 153, 203, 206, 224 n.32, 292
arkān (plur. of *rukn*), corner, support, corner support 117
awliyā' (plur. of *walī*), friends, friends of God, saints 22, 153–54, 219, 277
awtād (plur. of *watad*), pegs, tent pegs, pillars 65, 117, 151, 161, 225
ᶜayn thābita (plur. *aᶜyān thābita*), immutable prototype, pre-eternal suchness 278, 280

bahālīl (plur. of *bahlūl*), fools, those who are mad, the 'demented' 88–9
baraka, blessedness, blessing influence 62, 67, 125, 142 with n.40, 195, 292
barzakh, intermediary world 89, 118, 126 n.62
baṣīra, inner certainty, inner perception 63–4
bilād al-Rūm, the Roman' provinces, Anatolia
bilād al-Shām, the provinces of Shām, Syria
buht, stupefaction 258

dār al-ḥadīth, building dedicated to the study of *ḥadīth* 184, 189–92, 261

dār al-islām, the Islamic world, territories under the rule of Islam
dhikr, remembrance, invocation 36, 43, 49–50, 61, 123, 163–65, 270–72
dhimmī, a non-Muslim living under Islamic law, ethnic denomination for non-Muslim minorities 14–15, 234–35, 276
dīn, religion 39
dīwān, poetic anthology 209

falsafa, philosophy 102–9
fanā', annihilation, extinction 43, 140, 161–62
faqīh (plur. *fuqahā'*), jurist
faqr ilā llāh, poverty in God, need for God 165
faṣl, chapter
fatḥ, opening, illumination 33, 35–39, 91, 123, 153, 216
fatra, lapse, sense of abandonment 42–4, 172
fatwā, legal pronouncement, religious decree
fiqh, jurisprudence, law 94
fuqahā' (plur. of *faqīh*), jurists 94, 177, 191–92, 247, 250, 257, 259
futuwwa, chivalry, heroic generosity, initiatory organisation 120, 162, 170, 183, 205, 226

ghafla, heedlessness 32
al-ghayb, the invisible world 122
ghinā' billāh, sufficiency in God 165

ḥadīth, utterance, saying of Muḥammad, literature consisting of traditions about Muḥammad 94–100
ḥadīth qudsī, extra-Qur'ānic saying attributed to God 140 n.34, 214, 279, 288 n.225
ḥāfiẓ, one who has memorised the Qur'ān
ḥajj, pilgrimage 193, 197, 215
ḥakīm, sage, theosopher 105
ḥāl (plur. *aḥwāl*), state, mystical state 68
ḥammām, public bath
ḥaqīqa, truth, reality, essential reality 205–6, 270
ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya, Muḥammadan reality 77, 200
ḥaqq, reality, truth, God 22, 138, 208, 249, 288 n.225
ḥaram, sacred precinct, Mecca 124, 212–16, 222, 286
himma, aspiration 49
ḥuḍūr, presence, presence with God 271
ḥudūth, contingency, the contingent 118
ḥukm, authority, ruling, judgement 279–81

ᶜibāda (plur. *ᶜibādāt*), worship, act of worship 152, 204, 270
ʿjāz, inimitability 137
ijāza, certificate of authorisation 25, 187
ijāza ᶜāmma, general authorisation, authorisation given in a person's absence 45, 70, 97, 209, 250
ijtihād, personal effort, effort at interpretation 46
ikhtiyār, choice, free will, self-determination 71
ᶜilm (plur. *ᶜulūm*), knowledge, science 62, 136 n.20, 206
ᶜilm ladunī, knowledge inherent in God 62
ilqā' rabbānī, lordly projection 159
imām, religious leader
insān kāmil, perfect man 278, 283
irāda, will 105
ᶜisāwī, Christic, related to Jesus 51, 277
isnād, chain of transmission of a *ḥadīth* 11 n.4, 85 n.40, 98
isrā', night journey 154 n.94, 213
isrā'īliyyāt, traditions relating to Jews and Christians 100
istiᶜdād (plur. *istiᶜdādāt*), predisposition 280–81

istikhāra, prayer for guidance 230
ittiḥādiyya, unificationism, teaching of union with God 267
ittiḥādiyyūn, unificationists, those who teach union with God 249–50, 251 n.28, 258

jadhba, attraction, ecstasy 35 with n.11, 38–9
jāhil, ignorant 56
jāhiliyya, ignorance, the pre-Muslim period 21, 27, 31–2
jihād, holy war 182, 184, 246

kalām, theology 94, 102–3, 135–36
karāmāt (plur. of *karāma*), charismatic powers, miracles 59
kashf, revelation 105
khalq, creation 22, 208, 249, 288 n.225
khalwa, retreat, retreat from existence, solitude 33, 35, 38, 207, 257, 313 n.14
khānqāh, centre for retreat, monastery 68, 183–84, 189, 196, 255
khaṭīb, speaker, preacher
khatm, seal 76–81, 168, 200
khirqa, patched frock 60 with n.127, 62, 67–8, 87, 97, 134, 142–46, 150, 214, 222, 233, 236, 292, 299, 300
khuṭba, sermon, Friday sermon, prologue
kibrīt al-aḥmar, red sulphur 112 and n.10
kunya, surname
kūra, district, province

laysiyya, those who deny the reality of the world 139 n.31

madhhab (plur. *madhāhib*), religious legal school 45–6, 95, 148 n.66, 251, 254, 274
madrasa, college, academy 183–84, 196, 247–48, 254–55, 262–63, 266
Maghreb, North-West Africa
majdhūb (plur. *majdhūbūn*), ecstatic 44
majmūᶜāt (plur. of *majmūᶜa*), compilation, collection
malāmiyya (plur. of *malāmī*), people of blame 62, 70–1, 73, 135, 151–52, 179
manzil al-rumūz, realm or abode of symbols 117
manzil al-waḥdāniyya, realm or abode of unity 119
maqām (plur. *maqāmāt*), station, spiritual station 9, 47–8, 73, 89, 124, 137–38, 159 n.119, 174–75, 207, 240–41
maqṣūra, stall in a mosque near the *miḥrāb* 121
maᶜrifa, knowledge, gnosis 206
mashhad (plur. *mashāhid*), scene, spectacle, vision
Mashreq, the East
al-mastūrūn, the hidden ones 121
mawājīd, states of ecstasy 91
miḥrāb, recess in a mosque indicating the direction for prayer
miᶜrāj, ascension 84 n.39, 106, 153–57, 198–200, 206, 221, 287
mīthāq, pact 47, 215
mubashshira (plur. *mubashshirāt*), vision, heralding vision 33–4, 43 n.36
mudabbirūn (plur. of *mudabbir*), directors 72
muḥaddith (plur. *muḥaddithūn*), transmitter of *ḥadīths*
muezzin, person who gives the call for prayer
muḥaqqiqūn (plur. of *muḥaqqiq*), men of truth, those who have realised the truth 10
muḥāsaba, practice of examining one's conscience 70–1, 164, 271
mujāhada, spiritual struggle, effort, self-mortification 43, 195
muqaddima, introduction
muqrī', reader, reciter
murīd (plur. *murīdūn*), disciple

murshid, teacher, spiritual guide
al-murshid al-awwal, one's first teacher 61
mutakallim (plur. *mutakallimūn*), theologian, specialist in *kalām* 103, 136
muwallad, a Muslim of Spanish origin, Spaniard converted to Islam
muwallah (plur. *muwallahūn*), enraptured by God, madman of God 238, 258

nabī (plur. *anbiyā'*), prophet 77, 201
nafas al-raḥmān, breath of the merciful 19, 284
nā'ib, substitute 65, 200, 235
nāqil, transmitter, transmitter of traditions 56
nasab, genealogy, lineage
niyyātiyyūn, men of energetic intention 70, 237
nisba, assignation, name indicating one's place of origin
nubuwwa, prophecy 66, 71, 77–8, 159 n.119, 175, 200–1
nūr, light

qaḍā', pre-eternal decree 242 with n.144, 282
qadar, fate, destiny, existentiated decree 242 with n.144, 281–82
qāḍī, judge
qaṣīda, poem, ode
qibla, direction one faces in prayer, towards Mecca
qidam, eternity, the eternal
quṭb, pole 65, 67, 87, 126, 252
quṭbiyya, the function of *quṭb* 150

rabb, lord 138–39, 279, 281
raḥmāniyyūn (plur. of *raḥmānī*), men of mercy 19, 24
rājiᶜ (plur. *rājiᶜūn*), returner, someone who returns from the vision of God to created beings 139, 153–57
rakᶜa, bowing and prostration in prayer
rasūl (plur. *rusul*), messenger, apostle 77–8, 159, 201
rāwī, transmitter of *ḥadīths* 134, 214
ra'y, individual opinion (in theology) 42 with n.30
risāla, message, letter 77, 126–27
riyāḍa, discipline, ascetic discipline 35, 67, 91
rubūbiyya, sovereignty, lordship 40, 62, 120, 152, 195, 207
rūḥāniyya, spiritual influence or influx 47, 64 n.143, 142 n.40, 233
rujūᶜ, return, return to God, return to created beings 24, 34, 198
rukhṣa, alleviation, exemption, legal mitigation 46–7, 163
rusul (plur. of *rasūl*), messengers, apostles 201

ṣadaqa, charity, alms 177
ṣalāḥ, virtue 70
sālik, wayfarer, traveller on the spiritual path 162
samāᶜ, hearing, reading certificate, communal spiritual recital 2, 163, 221–24, 260–68, 272–73
shahāda, the formula *lā ilāha illā llāh*, 'There is no god but God' 164, 271–72
sharīᶜa, religious law 46–7, 64, 79, 143 n.43, 162, 205–6, 219, 235, 247, 257, 270, 286
shaṭḥ (plur. *shaṭaḥāt*), ecstatic pronouncement, statement made in a condition of ecstasy 116, 191–92 with n.40
shaykh (feminine *shaykha*), old man, teacher
shaykh al-shuyūkh, shaikh of shaikhs, master of masters 144, 187
shirk, polytheism 280
ṣidq, truth, sincerity, veracity 137
silsila, chain, chain of transmission, spiritual lineage 142–43, 230, 233, 291, 315–21

Sīra, biography of the prophet Muḥammad
sirr, secret, the innermost 140–42
siyāḥa, wandering 125, 132, 172
ṣuḥba, companionship, spiritual companionship 68, 143
sulūk, wayfaring, travelling on the spiritual path 35, 51, 64, 90, 296
sunna, way of life, the Prophet's manner of behaviour, orthodox Islam 44, 206
sūra, chapter of the Qur'ān

ṭabaqāt (plur. of *ṭabaqa*), strata, generations, biographical dictionaries 6, 94, 222
tadbīr, direction, governance 152
tafṣīl, detailed exposition 203
tafsīr, commentary, exegesis 97
tajalliyāt (plur. of *tajallī*), theophanies, divine revelations 139, 220, 283
tajrīd, stripping of oneself, emptying of oneself, self-denial 39
takbīr, utterance of the formula *Allāh Akbar* ('God is great')
taklīf, legal obligation 46, 141, 172
ṭālib (plur. *ṭullāb*), student, disciple 143 with n.43
taraḥḥum, the formula *Raḥimahu Allāh* ('May God's mercy be upon him'), spoken for someone who has died
tarbiya, education, initiation, spiritual training 64, 162, 165, 270
ṭarīqa (plur. *ṭuruq*), religious or mystical order, 57 n.110, 68, 190, 287
taṣawwuf, Sufism 102
tashbīh, anthropomorphism 135
ṭawāf, circumambulation 212–17, 285–86
tawakkul, trust, reliance on God 86, 131, 207
tawba, conversion, repentance 23, 32, 34, 39, 44, 73
tawḥīd, unity, teaching of the unity of God 29, 100, 108, 143 n.43
ta'wīl, allegory, allegorical interpretation of scripture 53
ṭayy al-arḍ, rolling up of the earth, the miraculous power of crossing great distances instantly or almost instantly 286
thubūt, permanence, stability 280–83
turbe, tomb

ʿubbād (plur. of *ʿābid*), worshipper, devotee 24
ʿubūdiyya, servitude 40–1, 61–2, 72, 116–20, 152, 196, 207
ʿudabā' (plur. of *adīb*), literati, specialists in *adab*-literature 100
ʿulamā' (plur. of *ʿālim*), men of knowledge, scholars, savants 94–9, 133, 184, 219–21, 246–78, 288

umma, community, religious community 124, 206, 219, 276, 291–92
uwaysī (plur. *uwaysiyya*), someone like Uways, a mystic whose link with his teacher is not physical 64 n.143, 142 n.40

waḥdat al-wujūd, oneness of being 208, 231–32, 278–79
wajd, ecstasy 164
walāya, sainthood, the state of the friends of God 65, 71, 77–81, 93, 127, 199–200, 205, 277–78
walī (plur. *awliyā'*), saint, friend of God passim
waqf, religious endowment, consecration of property for religious purposes
wāqiʿa (plur. *waqā'iʿ*), annunciatory vision 34, 43 with n.36, 100, 107, 290
wāqif (plur. *wāqifūn*), one who stands or stays, someone who remains constantly in the presence of God 139, 153
wārid, spiritual instant, spiritual inspiration 88, 91, 195

wārith (plur. *waratha*), heir 77, 98, 119, 124, 154, 156, 200, 233
waṣāyā, recommendations, testimonies 61, 98
wāṣilūn (plur. of *wāṣil*), those who arrive, who attain 201
watad (plur. *awtād*), peg, tent peg, pillar 65–6, 126, 151, 225
wirātha, inheritance 51, 124
wujūd, existence, being, spiritual experience 105, 208, 281
wuṣūl, arrival, attainment of the divine 198

zāhid, renouncer, ascetic 22 n.52, 136 n.20, 288
ziyāra, visiting, visiting sacred places 172
zuhhād (plur. of *zāhid*), renouncers, ascetics 22, 24
zuhd, renunciation, asceticism 39, 41, 69, 94, 162